

**AN INTRODUCTION TO A NIGERIAN
ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY**

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AN INTRODUCTION TO A NIGERIAN ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY

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Dedicated to my mother Felicia.

PREFACE

This work has been accepted as a dissertation in Theology by the theological faculty of the Ludwig Maximilian University Munich.

I owe a lot of thanks to my bishop Rt.Rev.Dr. Michael Eneja who made the necessary provisions for my studies in Europe. I was privileged to have had a Professor like Dr. Heinrich Döring to whom I owe a lot of thanks and to have also have had Professor Dr. Heinrich Fries as a moderator. My sincere thanks also to Missio for all assistance. What could have become of the work if not the immeasurable assistance and love I got from the family of Mr. & Mrs. J. Pender. I am deeply grateful to the entire members of the family for typing the work, for the publication and for all other material and moral encouragement. May God reward all and my relatives.

Nnamdi Anacletus Odoemene

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INTRODUCTION

"I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me"(Joh.17,20-21).

The unity towards which the churches strive is Jesus Christ himself, we therefore see ecumenism as an identification of oneself with Christ, which implies continuing the works he did on earth and preaching the gospel through words and actions. We can only bear witness to Christ by identifying ourselves with him, identifying ourselves with his cross and his glory.

This dissertation is an attempt to apply this notion of unity in God through Jesus Christ in bringing Christians together to bear witness to Christ through good works. It ought to be a challenge to the Muslims to bear witness to God through Mohammed and the good works they do; a challenge to the members of Nigerian traditional religion to bear witness to God through their conviction and the good works they do. Nigeria is made up of various ethnic, geographical, historical, cultural, social and political differences. To unite Nigerian Christians and encourage a dialogue with other religions in Nigeria, so that Nigeria may bear witness to Christ who is God, is the object of Nigerian ecumenical theology. A unity where people would be ready to freely give and receive without being unjust to any one.

To this end, the theology has to take into consideration Nigeria's present problems and hardship due to disunity, hatred, irresponsibility and ignorance. The theology is built on the Nigerian common ideas and experiences such as the traditional religion, colonial experience, culture and the gospel of Christ; these and some other aspects make Nigeria unique but similar to many other nations of Africa, that is why we tend to call our work, an "African Ecumenical Theology". The theology, the way we see it is not specific to any confession, but is catholic, in that it embraces all, apostolic in that it is based on the scriptures and apostolic tradition and Nigerian in that it is based on Nigerian experiences, problems and interests.

CHAPTER ONE

1.1 NIGERIA - A CONVERGING POINT OF DIVERSITIES:

1.1,1 Diversities and Pluralism -A Problem of one and many:

The world is seen by various peoples in various ways as a universe full of diversities, pluralities and contraries, a fact which has been for long the subject of human reflection. Mankind has never ceased to reflect on the origin and cause of diversities and pluralities in nature, and has come to offer and posit theories and powers that are supposed to be responsible not only for the universe but also for the diversities; theories and beliefs which differ according to peoples' various worldviews.

Peoples of Nigeria, like many other peoples of the world, posit a supernatural being or beings as the case may be, who they believe is responsible for the universe, ¹ including all the diversities which puzzle mankind which are later seen to be orderly and purposeful. Man is believed to have been created to obey the laws of nature and the ordinances of the power or powers behind nature. Since many or almost all Africans believe in one creator of the world ² with one purpose and interest reflected in harmony, accidents, natural catastrophes, sickness, sudden or mysterious deaths all unaccountable occurrences must either be the work of an evil one or a punishment from the one creator or his adjutants. The world and the universe are therefore thought to move in a particular given direction in which case contraries could not be tolerated; to avoid contraries, pluralities have therefore to be discouraged.

1. Elizabeth Isichei. Igbo Worlds. Macmillan London, 1977, 174 f
cf. Omosade Awolalu. Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites, 3

2. John Mbiti. Concepts of God in Africa. S.P.C.K, London 70, 21f

Africans, according to Mbiti, hold and seem to believe that the world and the entire life are sustained by harmony and rhythm; harmony, in that the nature has a definite direction, rhythm, in that time and the world unlimited have no end, whereby incidences like birth, childhood, adulthood, death and reincarnation form a circle, a rhythm and a harmony. ³ He went further to say that the existence of such harmony and rhythm are responsible for the unity of mankind with himself, with the nature and with God. ⁴ In which case a threat on nature is tantamount to a threat on mankind.

In the Hindu hymn of Rg-Veda, the highest and most supreme being is sexless, an impersonal ruler devoid of any sort of plurality. This highest reality is one, but human knowledge gives him various names like, Agni, Yama and Materisvan; all that exists is the work of his hands, he is the soul of the world and inhabits and gives life to all things. ⁵

Zen-Buddhism teaches that the spirit gives nature to all that exists, speaking of the spirit with reference to human knowledge and perception, in which case one thing could not only be seen by different people differently but have different names. In order to conceive a being as it is in reality, one has to perceive the being with what is called "non spirit", whereby one sees the being's original reality; a state of mind which Zen-Buddhism calls the "transcendental or the indiscriminatory consciousness". ⁶ A consciousness which excludes plurality and contraries.

3. John S.Mbiti. Afrikanische Religion und Weltanschauung.

Walter de Gruyter. Berlin, 1974, 31

4. Ibid, 20

5. S. Radhakrishnan. Indische Philosophie, I, Holle Darmstadt, 29, 78f

6. Toshihiko Izutsu. Philosophie des Zen-Buddhismus. Rowohlt Hamburg, 1979, 20-21

Xenophanes, one of the ancient Greek philosophers, taught that earth and water constitute the principle elements of the universe from which all living things have their origin and end. He says, " the earth and water are the only things that become and grow ..
..... we were all born from the earth and water". ⁷

For Heraclitus, the universe is directed by lightning, in which case he means fire. This fire, he says, is equipped with reasoning faculties and is the cause of all things; it judges and condemns. God, he says, changes himself like fire, he is day and night, winter and summer, war and peace. ⁸ He taught that all things are good and just in their nature, things which man has come to see in different ways, attributing bad, evil and unjust to nature, which are in the eyes of God good, just and beautiful.

Parmenides believed that all that is, is one, outside of which nothing exists. Every other thing that exists, he said, is nothing but a name, which men take to be real, a becoming, or a being. ⁹ The existence of "one", and the non-existence of non-being, implies the impossibility of change, since all that is, is one - the being, unchangeable in nature.

From all indications, the pre-socratic philosophers seem to have believed that the basic order and unity on which the apparent varieties and pluralities in the universe are based and governed is a material substance or object. ¹⁰ Perhaps a more realistic reflection on the problem of the one and many could be found in the philosophy of Empedocles, who said that love and strife, the two opposites, maintain and initiate change. Love creates and strife destroys, at one time love unites all things, at another

7. Hermann Diels. Fragmente der Vorsokratiker.1. 8d.Weidmannsche, Berlin, 1951, pp. 135 f

8. Heraclitus.hrsq.von Hermann Diels.ibid. p. 165

9. Parmenides.ibid. 238

10. Christopher Rowe. One and Many in Greek Religion. in "Eranos" 45, E.J.Brill, Leiden, p.57. (1976)

time strife scatters the unity; all things come from love and are united by love and are differentiated and scattered by strife. ¹¹ Although one could say that Heraclitus and Empedocles, more than other Greek philosophers, made considerable contributions towards solving the problem of the one and many; there still remains some difficulty in saying exactly what they meant and understood by the elements and concepts on which the many come to be one or reconciled with the one. ¹²

Plato makes a distinction between Forms and the things in the physical world, he sees form as one and self identical; but due to the various combinations of them with actions, with bodies, and with one another, they are seen by many as many. ¹³ That would mean that good and bad, justice and injustice, beauty and ugliness are all the same thing but seen in different lights. According to him, each form is found in its opposite, good in bad, bad in good, ugliness in beauty, beauty in ugliness etc.

In an attempt to illustrate the oneness of forms, whose identity he attributes to their relationship with the " good ", he says - " the good not only infuses the power of being known into all things known, but also bestows upon them their being and existence, and yet the good is not existence but lies far beyond it in dignity and power ". ¹⁴

Aristotle quotes the Pythagorians, who taught that numbers are the principle and material of all things, whose elements are even and uneven, even being unlimited, uneven being limited. Unity originates from the two and is even and uneven; numbers on the other hand originate from the unity and make up the whole universe.

11. Empedokles. hrsg. von H. Diels, a.a.O, pp. 315 f

12. Michael C. Stokes. One and Many in Presocratic Philosophy, centre for Hellenic studies, Washington, 1971, 251.

13. Platon. Der Staat. Sämtl. Wk. Bd. IV, Rufener, Artemis München 1974, (eingeleitet v. Olof Gigon) p. 298

14. Ibid. 348

The Pythagorians, according to Aristotle believe that 10 is the perfect number and contains the whole universe.¹⁵

The problem of the relationship between the many and the relationship between the many and the one or one which make up the principle of causality and the various cosmological accounts of various peoples of the world is also to a great extent responsible for peace and wars in the past and also determines the possibility of peace and war in the future. One could make such a presupposition, in that the theories of the one and many, in one way or the other tend to exclude the other, due to racial, religious, sexual and cultural traits. Since the unqualified truth, truth which hold at all times and in all places, absolute in nature, was believed to be attainable by human knowledge. Therefore whatever lies outside this given truth, time and situation notwithstanding, was regarded as false.

Contrary to all these views, Hume suggests that there can be no object which implies the existence of any other if we consider these objects in themselves, and never look beyond the ideas which we form of them. This is what he calls knowledge. He maintains that we could only through experience infer the existence of one object from that of another.¹⁶ This may be an extreme view and a danger to metaphysic, it is nevertheless a step towards a pluralistic thinking.

Modern philosophers like Karl Popper may raise an objection to the concept of an absolute truth or knowledge which is not time-bound. Popper is not interested in defending and securing any knowledge but in seeing that such knowledge progresses.¹⁷ He maintains that for every theory at every given time, many

15. Aristoteles .Metaphysik.hrsrg.v.Paul Gohlke, Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn 1961, 2.Auflage ,pp. 51 f

16. David Hume. The Philosophical Works.ed.by Thomas Hill Green & H.Grose vol.I, Scientia, Aalen 1964, 388

17. Karl Popper.Objektive Erkenntnis.Ein evolutionärer Entwurf, Hoffman u. Campe, Hamburg 1973, 49.

possible equally true theories exist even after many decisive proofs and examination have been undertaken. ¹⁸

That means that truth is always in danger of being replaced by another truth which may be more relevant to the situation and time in question; Popper sees the need of testing and comparing a truth at all times with other possible truths or theories claiming to be truthful. With such a proposition, one could see how the many are related to one another, how they displace one another according to situation and time.

Truth depends on some given condition; if there could be one given condition at every time, one could easily come to one lasting and generally accepted truth. Since there could be as many given conditions as there are individuals, peoples, situations and times, so also could there be various truths which supplement one another, because no one truth alone can represent the various truths of the various given conditions that could appear when people have to express their views. Undoubtedly, the biggest mistake the many could make is an attempt to annihilate one another, instead of accepting one another. We do not intend to say that truth is relative as such, since no one could say that of scientific truths, which are objectively verifiable, nor reasonably describe religious truths based on revelation as a relative truth; nevertheless, each of these truths depend largely on a given data. That brings us to the problem of pluralism, in which all lay claims to be true, the ones that exclude others and the ones which include others.

18. Ibid p. 27.

1.1,2

PHILOSOPHICAL PLURALISM:

The concept of pluralism strictly contradicts the concept of monism. The former recognises more than one principle of being, and the latter holds that all being may ultimately be referred to one category or genus, just as philosophies like idealism, pantheism, materialism etc. teach. The ancient Greek philosophers, the traditional African world-view as well as the teachings of so many world religions belong to this line or system of thought.

Spinoza identifies the monad as a life-given principle which exists only in God and can be known only through God, a Godly attribute which is unending and necessary in its nature. Since Spinoza believes that God is not only the cause of the existence of all things but also is Himself the existence of things; ¹⁹ and since all that exists, exists in God, there can therefore be nothing like accident, since all existence i.e., God Himself, exists out of necessity and therefore is determined to exist and function in a particular way in order to correspond to the nature of God rather than His will.²⁰ Such a philosophy rules out the need for a pluralism by undermining the power and purpose of human freedom and autonomy.

According to Schelling, the absolute (Ich) I, is that outside of which there can be no existence; in other words, the I is in itself all existence and the cause of all existence as well as the essence of all that is. He calls this absolute I an unending reality, which embodies all realities and destroys all its contraries through its absolute self-power. ²¹

19. Spinoza. Die Ethik nach Geometrischer Methode Dargestellt, Felix Meiner, Hamburg 1967, p.28

20. Ibid, p. 31

21. Friedrich Wilhelm Joseph Schelling. Wk.II, hrsg. v. Hartmut Buchner u. J. Jantzen, Frommann, Holzboog Stuttgart 1980, p.121 f.

No matter what he chooses to have as the absolute I, it is obvious that plurality is for him unacceptable and in fact cannot exist since the absolute I destroys its contraries through its absolute self-power.

Hegel, going further than Schelling, calls the absolute, which has for him a different meaning, the unity of the inward's with the outward's, regarding the outside as the reflection of the absolute; a reflection which he calls " a becoming " and " a transfer into the other ". He therefore calls reality the manifestation and a direct unity of form between the inward (the internal) and the outward (the external). In other words, reality is for him a reflection of the absolute, ²² and as such could only be one, statements for which one could accuse him of pantheism and determinism. For a reality like the one he proposes there could undoubtedly be no place for contraries and contradictions, which must be eliminated in order to preserve the purity of the reality. To that end, Hegel proposes a dialectical method through which one could come to the truth - the reality, a process where the differences between the thesis and the antithesis are eliminated in order to come to a synthesis, the one truth and reality. ²³ If, as he said, differences between the thesis and the antithesis are removed, the removal of which eventually brings one to a synthesis - an undisputable truth; should one not ask if such truth is at all conceivable without differences, contraries and contradictions. If reality consists of elimination of doubts, contraries, contradictions and differences, could one in spite of that come to a reality or to a position devoid of doubts, contraries and contradictions ? In other words, how real is reality ? Could man in spite of himself attain this reality ?

22. Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel. Wissenschaft der Logik. I
Sämtliche Wk. Bd.4, Herman Glockner (hrsg).
Friedrich Frommann, Holzboog Stuttgart 1965
p. 677 ff.

23. Ibid. p. 537 ff.

By refuting the doctrine of determinism, Leibniz to an extent clears the way for pluralistic thinking and restores the supremacy of human freedom. ²⁴

A man like William James refers to a pluralistic world as a federal republic and refers to monism as a monarchy. ²⁵

Russell, in a more radical sense in our opinion, terms ideas which hold that the universe is monistic in nature as nonsense, and went further to deny the unity, continuity and order in the universe. ²⁶

Karl Jaspers, an existentialist philosopher, made it clear that the reality or the objective world as it is can not be easily attainable by men. He says " the world is, what it is; human thinking and not the world could be true or false ". ²⁷ In other words, the world exists as it is in spite of our opinions about the world and reality. Jaspers went further to say that all accepted truths and facts are divided into subjectivity and objectivity, and that man by scientific research believes that he is handling an object which excludes himself, not knowing that he is at the same time researching himself, in that reality and the world which he is researching is made up of his subjective world. ²⁸

Our view of life or world-view , is an intellectual or mental construction, a thinking I, which we cannot encounter even in scientific research, in that this I is identical with the whole (world) and therefore cannot be separated from the world of the particular

24. G.W.Leibniz. Die Theodicee. hreg.v. A.Buchenau u. Ernst Cassirer, 4.Bd. Felix Meiner, Leipzig, 1925,143

25. William James. A Pluralistic Universe, NY,1909, 321 -2

26. Bertrand Russell. The Scientific Outlook,NY, 1931, 98

27. Karl Jaspers.Von der Wahrheit.R.Piper,München 1947, 627

28. Ibid. 628

scientist nor from his reality. 29

That is why many supporters of " fallibilistic criticism ", a theory which holds that all aspects of human knowledge must be subjected to criticism, because nothing is so good that it cannot be made better and (therefore) they maintain that criticism should be applicable to all human spheres of life. 30

Through such means, mankind could not only avoid mistakes and dogmatism but also come to realise the need for a theoretical openness of truth as an absolute, necessary for a world filled with a plurality of opinions. Plurality of opinions is an existential reality which cannot be wiped out nor could they be ultimately liquidated by oppression, thus, the need for a dialogue and a readiness to compromise is obvious. 31

Where such tolerance and readiness to compromise is absent, mankind, in the opinion of Watzlawick, would be facing the most murderous and despotic idea, namely, the madness of the idea of a " real " reality, whereby one does not take note of the fact that one is only referring to one's own opinion. 32

All we are trying to do is to recall the words of Aristotle , who is supposed to have said that consultation is the right thing to do when we are not sure of our knowledge and its validity (as a result of many other plausible opinions and truths), whereby consultation is not meant to be the end but the means to the end, 33 in practical life.

29. Erwin Schrödinger. Mind and Matter, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1958, p. 52

30. Helmut F. Spinner. Pluralismus als Erkenntnismodell. Suhrkamp. Frankfurt a.M., 1974, p. 106

31. Rainer Beck. Wahrheit Pluralismus Kunst. Ernst Vögel, München 1979, p. 99

32. Paul Watzlawick. Wie wirklich ist die Wirklichkeit ? R.Piper & Co. München 1976, p. 218 f.

33. Aristoteles. Nikomachische Ethik (1112 b)

1.1,3 PERSONALITY - AN INDIVIDUAL'S UNITY IN PLURALITY:

Personality is accepted to be an intellectual world, which a man builds inside himself, comprising a unity of perception and knowledge, all of which he utilises to achieve clarity and to develop his own taste and thinking faculties.

In as far as personality development is not a closed and finished state of a man but a process which accompanies a man's life and existence, ³⁴ it can therefore not be a predetermined mode of behaviour nor an absolute, which a man achieves at one particular time alone.

For Allport, personality is the dynamic organization within the individual of those psychophysical systems that determine his unique adjustments to his environment. ³⁵

According to the above definition, personality, although an organization within the individual, an internal harmony in the individual, is at the same time not static but dynamic, a process in which the individual reconciles the many in him to a single unique response to his environment.

The very fact that man is always in a continuous state of change and development is illustrated more vividly in man's corporal structure, e.g., change and development in a man's body weight, in the colour of his hair, skin etc. All of which go to demonstrate the fact that a man's corporal peculiarities are never in an absolute state but always in a relative state, whereby they are determined by many factors, a continuous process that ends with one's death. Man's intellectual peculiarities function almost in the same way, in as far as man undergoes changes of feelings, desire, values and decisions; facts that illustrate the psychic unstable nature of human beings, all due to the very fact that man is in one way or the other changed by every experience he has. ³⁶

34. Heinz Rempelin. Psychologie der Persönlichkeit. Ernst Reinhardt, 7.Auflage, München 1975, p. 35

35. G.W. Allport. Personality. A Psychological interpretation. New York, 1937, p.48

36. Heinz Rempelin. a.a.O. p.44

In spite of these changes in a man's disposition, one could still find in every individual particular or constant habitual traits with the help of which a friend can always predict the reaction of a friend to any given action. 37

These are facts which show that one's personality, although in constant development and change, is a unity in plurality. A unity which consists of a successful coordination of the intellectual experiences to function harmoniously and create an integrated personality as against a desintegrated personality. Remplein quotes Lersch, a renowned psychologist, who distinguishes two aspects of human drives, one of which he calls a "convergence" the other a "divergence". People with a converging drive, according to him, show in their behaviour a clear direction and purpose and are rarely in conflict. On the other hand, people with diverging drives are inconsistent and lack a strong character. 38

That goes to prove the fact that the various pluralities which one encounters should not be some sort of equal units whereby one is taken to be as good and true as the other, neglecting the particularity of situation and time which require a particular reaction, it also proves the fact that a particular truth could be replaced by another truth governed by the same motivating force aimed at the same goal, the very moment there is a slight change in situation. In other words, every situation has its definite need and answer to a problem pertaining to a definite end with a definite motivating force; in which case one should keep an eye on the situation and not on the answer to know when the situation changes in order to provide another answer. We are therefore for an objective pluralism determined by a relative dynamic monism.

37. Ibid. 45, 48

38. Ibid. 396- 7

1.1,4

CONCLUSION

Various peoples of the world have at various times and in various ways attempted to explain the existence of diversities and pluralities in the universe. The existence of orderliness and purposefulness in the universe leads to and justifies the proposition of a power or powers behind the universe. This idea gives rise to the belief in monism, an idea which holds that all events of the world follow one particular given order outside of which disorder and falsehood become the general rule. One can therefore ask if this one power or powers behind nature, responsible for nature and man in particular, allow man to live and act in freedom.

The answer is - yes, when one takes note of the fact that the so - called cosmic order still exists even when men and nature behave contrary to expectation. A harmony in diversities, responsible for the nourishment of nature and stimulation of progress; which points at the fact that diversities and pluralities in nature are not real contradictions but supplements, each of which like theories and beliefs hold at a given situation and time.

Psychologists say that a balanced personality is achieved when one successfully converges one's various instincts and drives to a unit or a common motivating force, thereby satisfying one's drives and instincts which exist in harmony with one another. Conversely, an unbalanced personality is achieved when one subdues instead of harmonizing one's drives and instincts, and thereby creates a disorder in oneself, just as it would be in the universe if diversities and pluralities would be subdued.

We are therefore opting for a pluralism, where diversities supplement one another to form a monism, instead of a monism where one thing displaces the others and contraries. In view of all these, we shall later come to see how pluralistic Nigeria is, and how she gets about with it.

1.2.0 THE GEOGRAPHY AND PEOPLES OF NIGERIA.

1.2.1 The physical Features.

The Federal Republic of Nigeria has an area of 923,768 square Kilometres, and stretches 1.120 km. from east to west and 1.040 km from north to south. On the west of Nigeria lies the Republic of Benin, on the north the Niger Republic, on the east the Republic of Cameroun and to the south the Atlantic Ocean with a coastline of about 800 Kilometres. Nigeria lies within the tropics between latitudes 4 and 14 north of the Equator and longitudes 3 and 14 , east of the Greenwich Meridian.

Physiographically, the country may be divided into upland and lowland areas. The main uplands are the Northern Plateau, the Yorubaland Plateau and the Udi Hills; and the chief lowlands are the Coastal Plain, the Niger - Benue Valley, the Plain of Sokoto and the Bornu Plain. The highland areas of Nigeria are made up mainly of igneous rocks (rocks formed due to enormous heat, and later solidified) and metamorphic rocks, while the lowland areas are made up of sedimentary rocks (drainage refuge deposited and subjected in the course of time to great pressure and hardened into rocks).

The River Niger, after which the country is named, is Nigeria's chief physical feature, most important river and the third longest river in Africa, rising in the mountains to the north-east of Sierra-Leone, and flowing 4.169 km to enter the Atlantic Ocean. Its principal tributary is the River Benue with its source in Cameroun; other main tributaries of the Niger within Nigeria are the Sokoto, Kaduna and Anambra Rivers. The Yope, the Yedseram and the Shari Rivers flow into Lake Chad. Among others which flow into the Atlantic are the Ogun, the Benue, the Bonny, the Cross, the Imo and Qua-Iboe Rivers. 39

1.2,2 CLIMATE *

The climate of Nigeria is influenced mainly by two wind systems: the rain-bearing south-west monsoon wind, which blows from the ocean; and the dry dusty north-east trade wind or harmattan, which blows from the Sahara Desert. The mean (or average) maximum temperature is about 30.55 ° C in the coastal region and around 34.44 ° C in the north, and the mean minimum temperature is about 22.2 ° C in the south and falls to about 18.88 ° C in the north. The south, with a low seasonal variation of temperature, has the highest minimum temperatures in March and April, when the Sun crosses the Equator causing a low-pressure, wind and rainfall belts down as they move northwards, and the minimum temperature is lowest in August, the height of the rainy season, when the moisture-laden south-westerly winds, bringing rain and steamy heat, are most intense. Minimum temperatures are highest in the north in April and May, when they range over 23.88 ° C, and are lowest in December and January, when they fall below 13.33 ° C, 40 due to the influence of the north-east wind or the Harmattan. Since she lies within the tropics, Nigeria's temperatures are always high, and her hottest period is within the months preceding the wet season. Temperatures fall during the wet season, partly because the rain helps to cool the atmosphere , but mainly on account of the heavy clouds in the sky, which absorbs some of the sun's rays. The longer duration of the wet season in the south, and the cooling influence of the sea, contribute a lot to the lower temperature of the Southern region, and at the same time creating a very high humidity (the dampness of the atmosphere, due to the presence of water vapour). The absence of cloud in the sky in most part of the year in the north allows the sun's rays to fall down directly upon the earth during the day - giving rise to high temperature, which falls rapidly in the night due to the absence of cloud to check the loss of heat. 41

40. Ibid. p. 42

41. W.A.Perkins & Jasper Stenbridge. Nigeria- A Descriptive Geography.Oxford University Press, London 1957,p.44f.

* See map on page 17.

1.2,³ RAINFALL AND VEGETATION *

Nigeria has two main seasons - the rainy and dry seasons, the former lasts in the south from March to November, and in the far north from mid-May to September. There are four seasons along the coast of Nigeria, due to short breaks in the rains, namely the long rainy season lasting from March to early August, the short dry season in August, the short rainy season lasting from September to early November and the long dry season from mid-November till February. ⁴²

The wettest part of Nigeria is the coastal region, where the south-west winds blow onshore throughout the year, and the amount of rain decreases rapidly from the coast inland, in other words, the amount of rainfall decreases from south to north. Rainfall averages about 177,8 cm a year at the western coast, and increasing to about 431,8 cm along the eastern coast, decreases to about 127 cm around central Nigeria, and falls as low as 50,8 cm in the extreme north. ⁴³ Lagos, for instance, on the west coast of Nigeria, has about 1,800 mm of rain a year, Abeokuta further inland, has only about 1,75 mm, and Sokoto in the far north receives only about 675 mm of rain a year. Calabar on the eastern coast records about 3,000 mm of rain a year, Makurdi further north has about 1,350 mm, and Maiduguri in the Lake Chad basin receives only about 625 mm a year. ⁴⁴

The annual distribution of rainfall is the most important factor that influences the vegetation of Nigeria, followed by the temperature which accounts for the amount of evaporation that takes place, and since evaporation is higher in a dry area, the amount of evaporation increases northwards. ⁴⁵ Consequently, the Mangrove swamps and high rain forests in the south gradually give way northwards to less dense forests and finally to grassland.

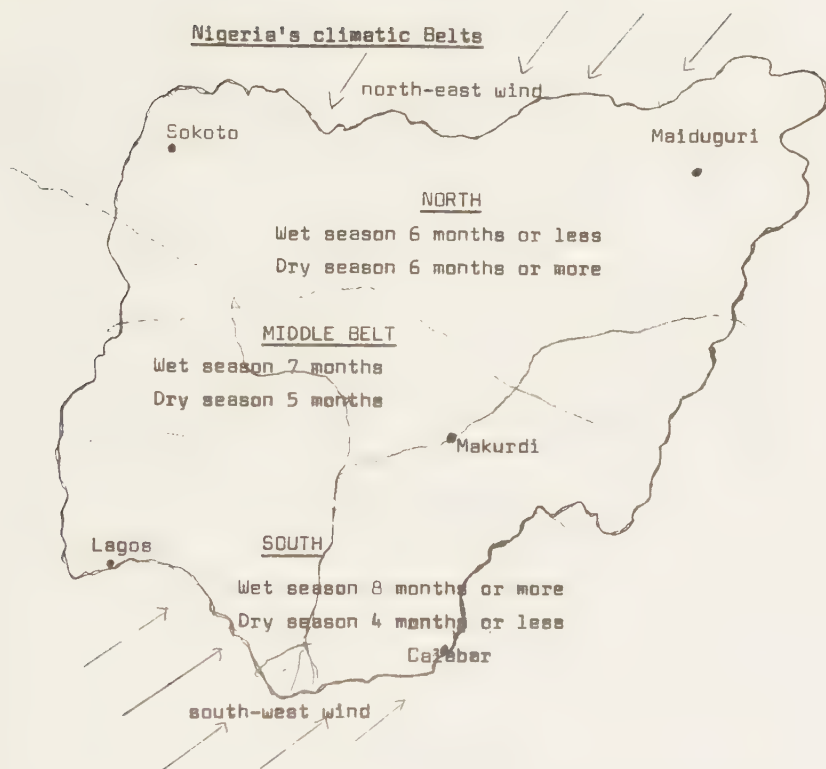
42. Reuben K.Udo. Geographical Regions of Nigeria. Univ. of California press, Los Angeles, 1970. p. 2

43. Nigeria Year Book 1983, p. 42

44. W.A.Perkins & Jasper Stenbridge. a.a.O. p. 42

45. Ibid. p. 50 f

* See maps on page 18



Climatic Belts. Nigeria may be divided into three main climatic belts based on the length of the wet and dry seasons. In the north, where the amount of rainfall in a year is less than 1,000 mm in many areas, the dry season is relatively longer and more intensive than the wet season, compared with the south with more than 1,125 mm of rainfall a year in many areas and a wet season lasting more than 8 months.⁴⁶ We shall later come to look at the effects of these climatic belts on the people.

⁴⁶. Ibid., pp.45, 47

Nigeria's natural vegetation map



Nigeria's natural vegetation zones.

The vegetation of Nigeria can be divided into two zones, namely:- high forest zone regions, which cover over 1/6 of the country, and the savanna zone. The high forest can be subdivided into mangrove or swamp and rain forest, and the savanna into grassland and scrub forest. Nigeria's rain forest stretches and forms a belt of about 128 km in depth, and has an annual average rainfall of about 1900,5 mm to 2540 mm. The savanna zone covers an area of about 791,040 sq.km. Northwards of the savanna where the annual rainfall is about 620,5 mm to 870,5 mm lies the scrub region. ⁴⁷ As we have seen, the geographical situation of Nigeria determines the climate, and the climate determines the vegetation, all of which in one way or the other create differences among the peoples of Nigeria, as we shall later come to see.

⁴⁷. Nigeria Year Book 1983. p. 42 f

1.2,4

The People of Nigeria.

The almost 100 million people of Nigeria belong to many ethnic groups, each with its own customs, traditions, costumes and languages. The larger groups are the Hausas, Fulanis and the Kanuris in the north, the Tivs and the Nupes in the middle belt and the Igbos, Yorubas, Ibibios and Edos in the south.*

Nigerians do not claim in any way whatsoever a common origin, nor has there been any theory indicating a common historical inheritance of the various ethnic groups outside the name Nigeria. Such attempt would definitely go beyond history and modern science in order to prove that differences in language, customs and traditions are mere decorations or effects of historical disconnections. From a sociological and anthropological point of view, one can not yet talk of a people of Nigeria without taxing the word 'people'; in that the observable differences outnumber the observable similarities.

As we said earlier, natural and physical features deepen and promote differences between north and south and in many ways influence culture as well. These features are responsible for the creation of the three political zones in the pre-independent Nigeria, which up till today cloud Nigerian politics and ordinary life. The first major zone is the coastlands of Nigeria, where the rainfall exceeds 3000 mm a year, and is subdivided by the river Niger into west and east. North of the coastland is a broad central zone or middle belt region, extending from 7 1/2 ° to 11 ° N., followed by the northern zone with a relatively dry climate. 48

In spite of every observable difference due to natural, physical and human factors, recent history is proving to Nigerians that they are identical to themselves alone (to Nigeria) and to no other people and also is beginning to prove these differences as subduable. We shall latter come to examine the various possibilities and ways of making a people out of the present various peoples of Nigeria.

48. Reuben K.Udo. Geographical Regions of Nigeria, a.a.O. p.8 f

* See map in page 20.

NIGERIA'S 19 STATES, LANGUAGES & ETHNIC GROUPS

NB. Languages are named after the ethnic groups. Not in the map are very minor ethnic groups and languages like Itsekiri, Igbirra, Ekoi, Alago, Ogini, Isoko, Higgi, Bura, Shua-Arab, Kaje, Jari, Kambari, Eggon, Kobchi, Angas, Karagare, Birom and Yergam.



 States

→ Ethnic groups and Languages

1.2,5

Conclusion.

The natural and physical features of Nigeria which influence not only the environment of the people but also their habits and consequently promote differences among the various ethnic groups, can best be seen as complementary factors in nature and in Nigeria's social and political reality, whereby one cannot do without the other, or consider itself more important than the other.

In actual fact, the climatic observations do not show a remarkable difference in temperature, nor do the natural vegetations create more differences among the people than occupation and life style would do in a harmonious village.

The various ethnic groups are in many ways and in various aspects different from one another, in other words, the manner in which the people meet their biological-physical and social needs differ from one another. We shall later come to see how related to one another these needs, their functions and expressions are, as well as the means or instruments with which these needs are met.

From all we have seen, neither geographical factors nor human factors or life styles arising from geographical conditions oppose one another, but from a complementary unity in pluralism, which is made obvious by the various agricultural products of the regions, whereby no region produces all the products the people need, but depend in one way or the other on the other regions.

We shall next come to look at the history of Nigeria, which has shown above many other factors, that Nigerians are seen from outside as an identity, have the same experiences and common problems, most of which arise from their mistakes and insufficient knowledge in some matters.

1.3,0

A SHORT HISTORY OF NIGERIA

1.3,1

Historical Implication

History implies reflection or thinking about particular incidents of the human past, and one reflects or thinks about one's past particularly in connection with a particular situation and upon an appropriate decision to take. History is present-minded and action-oriented, and occupies itself with present problems of man with the aim of predicting and to some extent determining the future. A historian also traces the consequences of past actions and decisions on people of his time.⁴⁹

According to Ernst Bloch, the past is like a river which flows towards us, and flows ahead into our future where it is given a new name.⁵⁰ That is to say, the past conditions the present and influences the future, in other words, there is an interdependence between generalizing judgements - (e.g., a river which was named 'A' in the past) and judgements about particulars - (e.g. a river presently named 'B ', identified by historians as being the same river that was named 'A' in the past). There is also an interdependence in thinking about the past, present and future,⁵¹ which is why a correct and unprejudiced historical account of every issue is necessary in order to understand the issue in question.

When one asks for the meaning and the intelligence behind history, one finds out that man as the subject of history makes history and gives it a meaning by taking seriously his present responsibility in view of the future.⁵² One sees oneself as a part of history, one does not see history as some thing apart from oneself and therefore takes the responsibility of giving history a meaning through one's activities.⁵³ We are therefore going to look at the history of Nigeria not only as a past that influences the present and the future but also the responsibility Nigerians have in using the facts of history in solving present day problems as well as the future.

49. Robert Stover. The Nature of Historical Thinking, N. Carolina 1967 p.225

50. Ernst Bloch, in L. Reinisch, Vom Sinn d. Tradition. Beck München 1970 p.30

51. Robert Stover. a.a.O. p. 217

52. Rudolf Bultman. in L. Reinisch, Der Sinn d. Geschichte. Beck München 1961, p.61

53. Theodor Litt. in Leonhard Reinisch. a.a.O. p.79

1.3,2

THE ANCIENT BLACKS:

Blacks were known to have spread as far as Europe within the palaeolithic age, and occupied many parts of India around 10000 BC.⁵⁴ Africa - the land of the Blacks, can only be well understood and appreciated by examining the life and achievements of the ancient Blacks, with whom the rest of the world has always been familiar, ⁵⁵ as the various names given to them indicate.

The early Greeks referred to the Blacks as Ethiopians, meaning a dark-burnt face. The predominantly Muslim Blacks of North Africa, who conquered and ruled the Iberian peninsula from the 8th century, were known as the Moors, a Greek word for black or dark coloured.⁵⁶ The name Egypt was given to the ancient Egyptians by the Greeks, who visiting the area and impressed by the temple of Ptah at Memphis, gave the region the name 'Hekuptah', which in Greek was rendered (Aiguptos). This region was later named (Aegyptus) by the Romans, a name indicating the nature of the inhabitants - when translated means - the land of the Black people.

The Greeks, like the Hebrews, called the Blacks also the Cushites, Cush being the son of Cham, whose other son was also called Misir, a name referring to the Egyptians (Gen. 10, 6ff).

Some of the Egyptian inscriptions named Ethiopia the land of Kasha; the Assyrian Cuneiform texts named Ethiopia the land of the Kushu.⁵⁷

Some scholars identify the Nubians (the land of gold derived most probably from the word (nough), meaning gold), ⁵⁸ with the Ethiopians, who for some time ruled Egypt and were often at war with the Egyptians. ⁵⁹

54. Joseph Ki-Zerbo. Die Geschichte Schwarz-Afrikas. Fischer, Frankfurt a.Main 1979 p. 74

55. W.E.B. Du Bois. The Negro. Kraus Thomson, NY. 1975 p.11

56. Gershom N. Amayo. in Transafrican Journal of History, Vol.10, Nairobi 81, p.2

57. Ibid. p.6

58. Joseph Ki-Zerbo. a.a.O. p.64

59. Sir E.A. Wallis Budge. Cooks Handbook for Egypt and the Sudan: 4th.Ed. Thos. Cook and Son Egypt Ltd. Cairo 1921. p.545 ff

Blacks in East Africa were referred to as Punts, one of the sons of Ham, and brother to Cush, Egypt and Canaan (Gn.10,6). This region was regarded as the home of the gods,⁶⁰ a region where incense and myrrh in abundance,⁶¹ where the Kings of Egypt were buried, the motherland of the Egyptians, from where it was reported the Egyptians inherited their laws.⁶² The early Egyptians called themselves Khem or Kmt, meaning blackman, and referred to the Nubians as Nehesi, meaning literally people from the South.⁶³

As we have seen, the Old Testament bible identifies Cush, Egypt and Punt as brothers (Gn.10,6). The Book of Numbers wrote about the Cushian wife of Moses, against whom Aaron and Miriam protested and were eventually repudiated and punished by God (Num. 12, 1-16). The king of Judah, Hezekiah, was frightened when he heard that the Ethiopian King, Tirhakah, was advancing against Judah and prayed to God for deliverance (2.Kg.19, 9 ff). Once, Zerah, the Ethiopian advanced against Asa, a Jewish king, with an army of a million men and three hundred chariots; according to the report in the prayers of Asa, the troops of Asa were so inferior to those of Zerah that they could not even face the Ethiopians, and so God Himself fought the war against Zerah and his army (2 Chron. 14, 9-12; 16,8). The Ethiopians and the people beyond the rivers of Ethiopia were described as tall, smooth, feared near and far, a nation mighty and conquering (Is.18,2), and as mighty men (in Jer. 46, 9). In the New Testament, the writer of the Acts of the Apostles wrote about the baptism of an Ethiopian eunuch by Philip on the road that goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza, an apostle of Christ (Acts 8, 26-39). So, the Blacks were in the ancient world not only identified with the Egyptians but were a known power to reckon with. With the introduction of the Transatlantic slave trade into the Iberian peninsula in the 15th century, the Spaniards, pioneers of the slave trade, adopted the name Negro, coined from the latin

60. Günther Roeder. Ägyptische Mythen und Legenden. Artemis, Zürich 1960, p. 12

61. Ibid., pp. 11-12

62. Joseph Ki-Zerbo. a.a.O., p.75

63. Ibid., p.78

word Niger meaning black to designate the Blacks taken into slavery and thereby distinguish them from the Moors, i.e. the Blacks of Southern Europe.⁶⁴

In one of the minor works of Aristotle, where he attempted to draw a correlation between the physical and the moral natures of living beings, he had the following to say of course out of his own naivety: " Those who are too black are cowards, like for instance, the Egyptians and Ethiopians. But those who are excessively white are also cowards as we can see from the example of women. The complexion of courage is between the two".⁶⁵

Herodotus, the father of history, said the following with regard to the origin of the Colchians ⁶⁶ :

" It is in fact manifest that the Colchidians are Egyptian by race several Egyptians told me in their opinion the Colchidians were descended from soldiers of Sesostris. I had conjectured as much myself from two pointers, firstly because they have black skins and kinky hair (to tell the truth this proves nothing for other peoples have them too) and secondly and more reliably for the reason that alone among mankind the Egyptians and the Ethiopians have practised circumcision since time immemorial. The Phoenicians and Syrians of Palestine themselves admit that they learnt the practice from the Egyptians while the Syrians in the river Thermodon and Pathenios region and their neighbours the Macrons say they learnt it recently from the Colchidians. These are the only races which practise circumcision and it is observable that they do it in the same way as the Egyptians. As between the Egyptians themselves and the Ethiopians I could not say which taught the other the practice for among them it is quite clearly a custom of great antiquity. As to the custom having been

64. Ibid p.3

65. Aristotle. Physiognomy, 6.in Cheikh Anta Diop: Egyptian History Revised. Origin of the Ancient Egyptians. Nov.1982 in Journal of African Civilization:vo1-4 No2 p.17

66. Colchians were a black skinned people who lived in the 5th cen. on the Armenian shore of the Black sea. Ibid. p.36

learnt through their Egyptian connections, a further strong proof to my mind is that all those Phoenicians trading to Greece cease to treat the pudenda after the Egyptian manner and do not subject their offspring to circumcision. " 67

According to testimony from Diodorus, a Greek historian and contemporary of Caesar Augustus, who quoted the Ethiopians who referred to Egypt as their colony, also claimed that the Egyptians received from them, as from the authors and their ancestors, the greater part of their laws. Egypt, they said, was at the beginning of the world nothing but sea, until the Nile, carrying down vast quantities of loam from Ethiopia in its flood-waters filled it in and made it part of the continent, where one Osiris later led in the Ethiopians. 68

Later on, a certain Ammianus Marcellinus, a Latin historian and friend of the Emperor Julian, wrote about nine centuries after Herodotus, that the men of Egypt are mostly brown or black, 69 evidence of the later mixture of black and white races in Egypt.

M.C.F.Volney, who travelled in Egypt between 1783 and 1785, at a time when African slavery was at its peak, made the following observations in Egypt.

" All of them are puffy-faced, heavy-eyed and thick-lipped, in a word, real mulatto faces. I was tempted to attribute this to the climate until, on visiting the Sphinx, the look of it gave me the clue to the enigma.

Beholding that head characteristically Negro in all its features, I recalled the well-known passage of Herodotus which reads:

'For my part I consider the Colchoi are a colony of the Egyptians because, like them, they are black-skinned and kinky-haired `.

67. Herodotus, Bk. II, 57. Ibid. p. 16

68. Diodorus. Universal History, Bk. III. Ibid. p. 18

The antiquity of Ethiopian civilization is attested

to by Homer, in the Iliad and the Odyssey (Iliad, I:422-3).

69. Ammianus Marcellinus. Bk.XXII, para.16 (23) Ibid. 18

In other words the ancient Egyptians were true negroes of the same stock as all the autochthonous peoples of Africa and from that date one sees how their race, after some centuries of mixing with the blood of Romans and Greeks, must have lost the full blackness of its original colour but retained the impression of its original mouldWhat a subject of meditation is the present-day barbarity and ignorance of the Copts who were considered born of the alliance of the deep genius of the Egyptians and the brilliance of the Greeks, that race of blacks who nowadays are slaves and the objects of our scorn is the very one to which we owe our arts, our sciences and even the use of the spoken word; and finally recollect that it is in the midst of the peoples claiming to be the greatest friends of liberty and humanity that the most barbarous of enslavements has been sanctioned and the question raised whether black men have brains of the same quality as those of white men".⁷⁰

The very fact the ancient Egyptians designated themselves as - kmt - meaning literally the Blackman, Km - meaning - black or Kmtjw meaning also the Black men, from where the bible word kam could have been drawn from, provides further evidence of the nature of the prehistoric and historic Black word, whom the Greeks called Ethiopians, Moors, Egyptians, the Near Eastern races the Kushites, Kamites etc. and the Romans Africans. Another remarkable finding illustrating the oneness of the people of the ancient African continent is the linguistic affinity existing between the ancient Egyptian language, and the present day Senegalese language, Walaf, spoken in the extreme west of Africa, on the Atlantic ocean. ⁷¹

70. M.C.F.Volney. Voyages en Syrie et en Egypte, Paris,1787,
vol.1, pp.74-7: Ibid. p. 19

71. Sossou Nsougan discovery in. Ibid. p. 20

Egyptian(kef)-to grasp. Walaf (kef)-seize a prey.
feh - go away. feh - rush off
Coptic (keh) - to tame

From all indication, the affinity of the languages are
genealogical in nature.

Islam during the time of the prophet Mohammed was very friendly and respectful to the blacks. As the followers of the prophet were being persecuted in Arabia, the prophet encouraged them to seek refuge in Abyssinia, today Ethiopia. He told them " when you flee into Abyssinia, you will find there a king, under whom no one is persecuted. It is a land where justice reigns, a land where God will wipe away all your sufferings". It was alleged to the prophet Mohammed to have said to his men to avoid all quarrel with the Ethiopians (the blacks), because they (the Ethiopians) inherited nine-tenths of the boldness allotted to the human race.⁷²

From very many indications, the civilization of the Nile Valley was due to the achievements of black people who were named Cushites and Mizraimites (Ethiopians and Egyptians). Homer called the Ethiopians the most just of men and the favorites of the gods, Herodotus described them as the tallest, most beautiful and long lived of the human race. ⁷³ Diodorus Siculus and Stephanus of Byzantium hold the view that blacks of antiquity were the earliest of all the civilized people on earth. ⁷⁴

In recent time, discoveries have been made which effectively bear witness to the claims that blacks or Africans were the bearers of world civilization. In 1978, Peter Schmidt, a professor of anthropology, and Donald Avery, a professor of engineering, testified that carbon steel was produced between 1500 - 2000 years ago by the Africans living on the western shores of Lake Victoria. This carbon steel, they said, was produced by pre-heated forced-draft furnaces, a method more sophisticated than any developed in Europe until the mid - 19th century. ⁷⁵

72. Joseph Ki-Zerbo. a.a.O. p. 123

73. Du Bois. Black Folk: Then and Now. in, Gershom N. Amayo. The Birthplace of the Ancient Blacks' Education and Culture, Transafrican Journal of History, vol, 1981 p.7 f

74. Diodorus Siculus, Ibid., p. 8

75. Ivan Van Sertima. The Lost Sciences of Africa. in, Blacks in Science, Ancient and Modern, London, 1983, p. 9

Unprejudiced scientists have gradually come to acknowledge the fact that the Dogon of Mali had, even before the birth of Christ, a very modern view of our solar system and of the universe, of the rings of Saturn, the moons of Jupiter and the spiral structure of the Milky Way Galaxy. They knew the moon was barren and also that a billion worlds spiralled in space like the circulation of blood within the body of God. ⁷⁶ There is not only evidence of early knowledge of mathematics and engineering works like the walls of Zimbabwe, but also agriculture practised 10,000 yrs. before that of Egypt at sites near the Nile. Other sites in Tushka in Nubia equally indicated, like those near the Nile, North of Aswan, that agricultural products like barley, corn, and wheat, were cultivated about 17,500 to 18,000 years ago.

In 1980, Dr. Charles Nelson of the University of Massachusetts announced that he had unearthed evidence in the Lukenya Hill in Kenya that Africans had been domesticating cattle 15,000 years ago. Dr. Nelson therefore concludes that Pre-Stone Age Africans lived in this area of the upper Nile and communicated with the Middle East through trading. ⁷⁷

There were also many other inventions and renowned cultures like the Nok culture in Northern Nigeria, the Yoruba Kingdoms, the Benin and Hausa states in Nigeria ⁷⁸ which indicate the level of economic civilization of black Africa before their European contact.

76. Ibid., p. 11

77. Ibid. p. 20: According to a report from Fred Wendorf in 1979, in Science Magazine, Africans were cultivating and harvesting cereals (barley & wheat) before any other people.

78. Nigeria Year Book 1983, p.46 f, Afrika. Fischer Weltgeschichte, a.a.O. p.43; J.D.Omer-Cooper, E.A.Ayandele, A.E.Afigbo and R.J.Gavin: The Growth of African Civilization: The making of Modern Africa vol. I, Longman Essex, 1981, p. 18

The Igbo Ukwu (in Igboland) discoveries are also a part of an ancient African civilization ⁷⁹ which as it were, seem to have lost its systematic development and continuity in the course of history.

From all we have seen, the idea of a nation or a state was foreign not only to the Nigerians but also to many ancient African tribes and ethnic groupings, most of whom, like the Nigerians, had no proper names to depict themselves other than descriptive adjectives, like kmt, or the descriptive adjectives used by others to refer to them, like Ethiopians, Egyptians, Moors, Africans, Negroes etc.

We have also seen that the ancient Egyptians from every indication were like today's Black Africans, as not only the name indicates but also from the classical Egyptian statues and monuments portraying black African features included in portraits of their kings and queens.⁸⁰

In view of all we have seen and said about the ancient Black peoples, who were merely given collective, descriptive names by which Nigerians are equally referred to when it is used, just as one could use specific descriptive adjectives to qualify the European races, with of course very little variation.

We shall now come to concentrate particularly on the Nigerians, the ethnic groups and their common experiences with the sole intention of seeing the challenges they met in the course of history that made them just as M.C.F. Volney said, enslaved and objects of scorn for other peoples. A race who he says led the world in the fields of arts, sciences and linguistics, about whom the question was later asked, whether the people had the same quality of brain as white men.

79. Karl Ferdinand Schädler, *Afrikanische Kunst*, Wilhelm Heyne, München 1975, p.132; Elizabetz Isichei, *A History of Igbo people*, a.a.O. p. 15

80. W.E.B. DuBois. *The Negro*. Millwood, NY, 1975, p.34 f

1.3,3

NIGERIAN ETHNIC GROUPS:

Nigeria is a land with many ethnic groups, languages and cultures. For the purpose of brevity and importance we may consider in this section the three main ethnic groups only, namely the Hausas, the Igbos and the Yorubas. A few words could also be said about some of the other ethnic groups.

THE HAUSAS:

The Hausa people are mainly within 10.5 and 13.5 degrees north and between 4 to 10 degrees east. This area is comprised mainly of North Nigeria and the basin of the Sokoto river and its tributaries to the west, and of a great plateau to the east. Its climate is of the North Sudan type, with two main seasons; the dry season which lasts for about eight months and a rainy season of about four months, during which an average of 625 mm annual rainfall is measured. This Region has an average temperature of about 30° C, with a minimum of about 10° C, and a maximum of about 45° C. The fall of rainfall varies from year to year, thus arming and abricultural uncertainties arise. Being a very dry area, the peoples life and agriculture are to a large extent controlled by the rainfall. 81

Hausa is not a definite ethnic group like the Igbos or the Yorubas, but denotes a group of people found in different African Countries- Nigeria, Chad, Niger and Cameroun who share a common language, Hausa, and a similar way of life. 82

Closely associated with the Hausas are the Fulani, the ruling class in this area, who are subdivided into two groups viz. the town Fulani (Fulanin gida) and the nomadic Fulani (Fulanin deji). Hausa Society is hierarchical. Its strata begin with the household members with their head as the " Maigida ", normally the senior male of the group and responsible for every household

81. Nicolas Monfonga Jacqueline. Ambivalence et culte de possession contribution à l'étude du Bori Hausa
Éditions anthropos. Paris 6^e, 1972 p. 18

82. Hill Polly: Rural Hausa. A village and a setting.
Cambridge 1972, p.3

member. A group of Houses or a compound constitutes a ward with a head " Mai unguwa ". Groups of Wards make up a village, while groups of Villages form a fief controlled by a fief holder, " Lakimi ". The Fiefs within a given area, together with the towns and various other vassal states, form the state " Lardi " over which an " Emir ", Chief, presides. Under British rule a district head replaced the Fief holder. The most significant social division is between the nobility, " Masu Saranta ", or Rulers, and the commoners, " Talakawa", thus the two classes in a Hausa society. Children born in the ruling class are the high class citizens even though they are poor, and no one who is not born into the royal family or the ruling class can become a noble no matter how rich and influential he may be. It is obvious that the political structure simply gave meaning to the social structure or could even be contemporaneous.⁸³ One could easily see the pyramidal structure of the state and the social life, the Emirs at the top, followed by the ruling aristocrats, koranic scholars and farmers; behind these come the wealthy merchants. Such social structure perpetuates exploitation and the oppression of the lower-class citizens, resulting in disunity and social injustice.

The origin of the Hausas is not yet clear, but according to legend, a man called Bawo, who is supposed to be the fore-father of the Hausas, named his seven sons Biram, Daura, Karsina, Zaria, Kano, Rano and Gobir; who later form the seven Hausa states (Hausa Bakwai) each with a special communal responsibility. There are also " Banza Bakwai ", the bastard seven, namely, Zamfara, Kebbi, Gwari, Yauri, Nupe, Ilorin and Kwara, who came under the Hausa rule and adopted their culture and language. ⁸⁴

83. Dandatti Abdulkadir. The role of an oral Singer in Hausa Fulani society. A case study of Mammon Shata.

Folklore Inst. Indiana Univ. 1975, pp.46-48

84. Hatch John. Nigeria - A History. Secker and Warburg, London 1971, p. 43 f

Islam later came to unite several of these warlike communities, in the 13th Century, and became the religion of the city dwellers, leaving the rural peasants pagans and undereducated and therefore the underdogs of the community, meant to serve the interests of the city dwellers. Injustice and other social ills practised at this time by the Hausa Chiefs and the common relsyncretism led to the religious reformation (Jihad) headed by a devout Fulani Moslem called Usman Dan Fodio. A spiritual leader, writer and intellectual from Malle, he settled in Degel from where he started his great religious revival.⁸⁵

It was in 1804 he started the Jihad (holy war) and he was aided by his son Muhammed Bello and his brother Abdallehi. He echoed a contemporary political and intellectual movement going on at this time in the Middle East, viz. the Sufi response to Wahhabi reform in Arabia.⁸⁶ Usman Dan Fodio quickly gathered supporters among his fellow Fulanis and Hausas, who were opposed to and indignant over the Hausa oppression, slave trading and arbitrary taxation. The 14 Flagbearers of Usman and their successors were successful in extending Fulani rule and Islam in and outside Hausa states even into Yoruba land. So Islam was strengthened and the Northern Peoples unified,⁸⁷ but self-determination and personal freedom were not guaranteed.

BRITISH COLONIZATION:

The Northern aristocrats vehemently objected to British penetration into and intervention in their affairs, fearing religious, economic and social change and perhaps a dethronement as some of the letters from some of the rulers indicate. According to one of the letters from the Sultan of Sokoto to the British

85. Backwell F.H. The Occupation of Hausaland 1900 - 1904:

Being a translation of Arabic letters
found in the house of the Waziri of
Sokoto in 1903. Frank Cass and Co.Ltd.
London. 1969,p.4

86. Martin G.B. Muslim Brotherhood in 19th Century Africa.
Cambridge Univ. press. 1976, p. 14

87. Crampton E.P.T.Christianity in Northern Nigeria:London 1976,p.10f

High Commissioner Lord Lugard, who first wrote him that he was sending troops to discipline the Emir of Bauchi, he refused to obey the instructions the Sultan himself gave him. Further, the Commissioner talked of removing some of the Emirs and judging some Chiefs and other Muslim rulers. The Sultan replied:

" From us to you. I do not consent that any one from you should ever dwell with us. I will never agree with you. I will have nothing ever to do with you. Between us and you there are no dealings except as between Mussulmans and Kafiri (Unbelievers), war, as God Almighty has enjoined on us. There is no power or strength save in God on high. This with Salutation ". Received about May 1902.

Another letter from the Sultan reads:

" To Governor Lugard.

I have to inform you that we do not invite your administration in the Province of Bauchi and if you have interfered we do not want support from any one except from God, the Best Supporter, and there is no power except in him, the Mighty and Exalted. Peace ".

Received about June 1902. 88

These letters indicate that the British colonial administration never had it easy until the Emirs discovered that the British were not after the religion and the social order, but for purely economic and political purposes, that recognised and tolerated the existing social and political order. With the introduction of the indirect system of rule, inequality and other social injustices were condoned and practised by the British colonial administration as we may later come to see.

THE YORUBAS:

The Yoruba Land lies west of the River Niger. The Republic of Benin is in the west and the Bight of Benin in the South. It lies

roughly between latitudes 6° and 9° north, and longitudes 2° 30' east. The Yorubas are concentrated in the Oyo, Ondo, Ogun, Lagos and Kwara states and a section of the Bendel of Nigeria. There are also Yorubas in the Republic of Benin and Togo.

ORIGIN OF THE YORUBAS:

Yorubas recognise Oduduwa as their ancestor, who fled out of Arabia, and came to settle in the west of Nigeria. Aduduwa they say was an offspring from Lamurudu, one of the Kings of Mecca. Other offspring of the King are the Kings of Gogobiri and Kukawa in Hausa Land. Oduduwa settled at Ile Ife with his sons where he swore a mortal hatred of the Moslems who drove him out of Arabia because of his pagan practices.⁸⁹ Oduduwa's son Okanbi left behind seven princes and princesses, who the Yorubas believed founded the Yoruba nations, with Ile Ife as their holy city and religious centre.⁹⁰

GOVERNMENT AND POLITICS IN YORUBA LAND:

There is a distinction between the proper Yorubas (the interior part of the country) and the coastal Yorubas. The former is the centre of activity, because the Yoruba civilization came from the north through their connection with the Arabs and the Fulanis. The Yoruba proper who were thoroughly organised, disregarded the coastal Yorubas who were generally backwards and moreover traded in human beings with the European merchants. Yorubas have an absolute monarchy, with a king elected men known as Oyo Mesi, the seven counsellors of state, Though the office is hereditary, it does not necessarily mean that the office cannot leave a

89. Johnson Samuel. The History of the Yorubas: From the earliest times to the Beginning of the British Protectorate C.M.S. Nigeria Bookshop.Lagos 1957,p. 7 ff

90. Ibid. p. 8 f

family for another. ⁹¹

The supreme head of all the kings and princes of the Yoruba nation is the Alafin, a direct lineal descendant of the founder of the nation, who is elected by a special body, and lives a secluded life. ⁹² Later in their history, they grew so very despotic and powerful that the Oyo Mesi (counsellors) and their Basorun (Chiefs) decided to check the powers of the Alafins. In time, an Alafin was reduced to a worthy figure-head. His political powers were restricted by the Oyo Mesi. On the other hand, the Alafin and Oyo Mesi were checked by the Ogboni, a secret society who had to sanction all decisions arrived at by the Alafin and Oyo Mesi. At the beginning of the 19th Century, the Alafin of Oyo started to lose control over his kings and tributaries (States), starting with the revolt of Afonja in Ilorin, aided by the Fulani, which eventually resulted to the Yoruba war. Ibadan and Abeokuta emerged in the course of the war, took up the leadership and became the heart of Yoruba-Land. ⁹³

The other states later teamed up against Ibadan in 1878-1893. With the intervention of the British on the side of Ibadan, the rival group was defeated and the war was forced to come to an end. Yorubas suffered a lot at the hands of the Fulanis from the North, who were very eager to spread Islam, and from the British who not only gained access into Yoruba and proper and deprived the Yorubas of their independence but also bought war captives from all sides. ⁹⁴ Eventually the Yoruba Kingdom came to an end, and the British installed their colonial Government.

91. Ibid. p. 40

92. Ibid. pp. 41 a. 46

93. Crowder Michael a.a.O. pp.90 f

94. Omer- Cooper J.D.; Ayandele E.A.; Afigbo A.E.; Gavin R.J.
The Growth of African Civilization: The making of modern
Africa. vol.1, Longmans Hong Kong 1981, p. 176 f

THE IGBOS:

Igbo land lies in South-eastern Nigeria between latitude 5° -7° north and longitude 6° to 8° east. In the northern part of Igbo-land lie Onitsha, Awaka, Enugu, Nsukka, Udi, Awgu etc. in the south, Okigwe, Owerri, Umuahia, Bende etc. in the west Ika-Igbos and the Riverain Igbos, in the east, Afikpo, Abakeliki, Aro etc.

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL HISTORY OF THE IGBOS:

The Igbos inhabit mainly the equatorial forest region of South-eastern Nigeria, creating the impression that the people sought the protection of the thick, hardly penetrable and unfriendly rainforest. Quite unlike the other peoples of Nigeria, they never had a central Government or formed a united political body. Igbos dwell so segregatedly from one another that one could logically conclude that they are highly individualistic. The very fact that they govern themselves, often settle their differences amicably without consulting a law Giver or a Sovereign, owe no allegiance to any body or to group of persons, shows how democratic minded they are. Surely experience must have taught them to live democratically, hence their repulsive attitude towards an external Government and power-assuming individuals. ⁹⁵

One may therefore encounter enormous difficulties if one is to treat the Igbo history as such, since the Igbos scarcely lived or cooperated as an economic or political unit prior to external intervention, especially the European incursion and the sad and evil consequences. In spite of their independent way of life, they have a common culture, language, religion and worldview. Although there were often intervillage wars and aggressions, these were often quickly settled according to tradition and love of

95. Forde Daryll and Jones G.I. The Ibo and Ibibio speaking peoples of South eastern Nigeria. Oxford Univ. press, London 1950, p. 24

justice and order.⁹⁶ Among the Igbo common experiences of the recent time, that have come to make them aware of the need of a unity and at the same time serve as a warning to them is the slave-raid of the 18th Century and a good part of the 19th Century, whereby they fell a prey to European and African Slave raiders. ⁹⁷ Another great incident was the British colonial rule and its consequences.

British Colonial Government incursion the Igboland was bitterly resisted by the Igbos. Their attempt to introduce an indirect rule was unsuccessful, their presence unwellcome, their rule and authority unaccepted until they were militarily subdued. In spite of that, there was still resistance to British rule and presence from the Igbo men and women; for example the Aba Women's war of 1929, when the Women were provoked by the rumour that they would be paying tax to the British Colonial Government; they therefore went on the streets and roads against the British Government and Administrators.

One should not fail to mention that for almost 20 yrs. the Igbos resisted the British incessant punitive expeditions with very crude weapons against the superior British weapons, ⁹⁸ an incident that falls in line with the ' Biafran ' Nigerian war of 1967 to 1970. That the Igbo resistance was greatly felt by the British at home and in Nigeria is made clear by the report in 1909 of a British soldier who in discussing his military campaigns in Nigeria told his audience that the Igboland " is really quite a small portion of Nigeriabut it has been the most troublesome section of any ". ⁹⁹

96. Green M. Margaret. Igbo Village Affairs: (Chiefly with reference to the village of Umueke Agbaja) London 1964, p.63 f

97. Talbot Amoury P. The peoples of Southern Nigeria.vol.I, London 1969, p. 249

98. Elizabeth Isichei: A History of the Igbo people, London 1976, pp. 119 - 121

99. Discussions following E.A.Steel, Exploration in Southern Nigeria apud Elizabeth Isichei p. 121

Following the native court's proclamation of 1900, Igboland was arbitrarily divided into various native courts consisting of several independent villages bounded together in order to achieve a British end. Political and judiciary appointments were made by the British for a people who had always lived democratically, and British law was enforced upon them. The British once more applied their old trick of setting people against one another, by appointing Chiefs, Clerks and messengers with wide powers, and at the same time built many prisons for those who might resist this new order of things. Irresponsibility on the part of the political and judiciary Officers who owed no allegiance to the people they ruled brought about corruption and so many social ills.¹⁰⁰ With the replacement of traditional rule and custom with British law, and with the abolition of the traditional way of promulgating and enforcing law and democracy, the people felt themselves like birds in a cages.¹⁰¹ Granted, the Igbos were now more politically united with a growing spirit of communalism but they were at the same time gradually separating themselves from their culture and from the reality in which they lived because they were gradually assimilating European ideas and values. This eventually gave rise to cultural and social dualism within groups and individuals and some ended up in self-alienation. Henshaw James Eue's narration illustrates a different milieu but a similar experience in his book "Jewels of the Shrine", where he tells of his confusion as a Christian, converted from the traditional religion. He writes:

" You know, woman, when I worshipped at our forefather's shrine I was happy. I knew what it was all about. It was my life. Then the preachers came, and I abandoned the beliefs of our Fathers. The old ways did not leave me; the new ways did not wholly accept me. I was therefore unhappy ".

100. Uchendu Victor. The Igbo of Southern Nigeria. Holt, Rinehart and Winston. New York 1965, p. 47

101. Green Margaret. a.s.O. pp. 57 and 133

102. Ene James Henshaw. The Jewels of the Shrine -This is our chance: Univ.London press. London 1973, pp.41 f

The conflict the man experiences was due to the fact that the new way had no connection with the old way and moreover were all out at one another. If the people had taken the patience to find the connection, I believe there might possibly not have been a conflict, at least not to such an extent.

If the Igbos had at least accepted their culture and tradition as the basis and criterion for the acceptance of foreign values and way of life, there could have been less problems of social and cultural dualism, as it is today. The very fact that the Igbos are people out for progress and competition at all costs, as some people, more especially external observers, have rightly remarked. ¹⁰³ Changes therefore went on unrestricted, until some of the people started asking themselves critical questions like: What are we, and where are we heading to ?

103. Uchendu Victor. a.a.O. p. 36

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CONCLUSION:

Nigeria as we have seen is made up of groups of peoples coerced together as a Nation in order to achieve a foreign end and interest. In other words Nigerians never knew why they should build a nation together, and was therefore for many meaningless. Just as Islam united the North by force and perpetuated Feudalism and self-alienation, so also did Colonialism unite the peoples of Nigeria and promoted imperialism and collective alienation. Nigerian peoples on many occasions fell victim to external aggression because of their internal disunity of which the aggressors always made use. The future of Nigeria therefore lies in the internal unity of the peoples. Of course not the type of unity the British colonial administrators and the Islam Crusaders wanted but a unity with oneself, with the community and the culture. Nigeria can only be a really independent nation when the people are one with themselves, with one another and with their culture.

From all we have seen, disunity has been from the very beginning of Nigerian history her greatest enemy. Nigerians should therefore see the many reasons for unity if ever they would look back at the common experiences they have had. They should therefore not only promote their national unity but also African unity, the absence of which made the African peoples an easy victim to external aggressors. Religion has been in Nigeria an important means and instrument of unity. The Feudal rulers in the North combined politics with religion; Yoruba Government and Law would be meaningless without religion; the Igbo democracy would also have been unpracticable without the traditional religion. We shall later have a close look at the Nigerian traditional religion, but meanwhile let's have a look at the impact of colonialism of which Nigerians were victims.

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COLONIALISM.

The world was seen by the colonizers of the 20th century as eurocentric, whereby the rest of the world was divinely destined to be civilized by Europe. This belief strengthened and justified colonialism, as imperialism which we shall define as an usurpation of a land by a foreign people, thereby forcing the inhabitants to serve the interests of the foreigners. One would no doubt give many examples of such cases which might be as old as the world itself, but none would be compared with the colonization of the Black peoples. A colonization which meant for many Africans a cultural- and self-denial, and that is exactly the purpose of colonial education and civilization, which prepares the mind for unlimited exploitation and oppression which is still going on till today in various disguised ways.

Colonialism with regards to Black Africans is the destruction of the individual and group uniqueness, an internal dissolution of the beingness of someone, a demolition of the self and group identity of the African personality. According to Thomas Aquinas, matter, i.e. the human body, is the principle of individuation of the human form, i.e. the rational and immortal human soul. 104

This very matter of human body, the principle of individuation, was often given as the reason for the colonization of the Black peoples, which means if (according to the logic) the matter had not been what it was, there could not have been colonization, and perhaps for colonization to come to an end, the matter or human body which includes culture etc. had to be done away with. Such an elimination of the individual and group unity would definitely mean an internal elimination of the self. 105

104. Knut Trany. Thomas Aquinas. in A critical History of Western Philosophy.ed.by D.J.O.Connor.Macmillan London 1964. p. 107

105. Josef Stallmach. Das "Nichtandere" als Begriff des Absoluten. Zur Auswertung der mystischen Theo.d.Pseudo Dionysius.in Universitas. Matthias Grünwald Bd. I Mainz 1960 p.329

There may be many reasons for the colonization of the Black people and their land, most of which are centred on a feeling of superiority which went as far as doubting the humanity of the Africans, but the most expedient reason lies within the field of economics. A famous Nigerian historian summed up colonialism and the history of European African encounter in the following way. " It is a matter for reflection that little of permanent value came to West Africa from the 400 years of trade with Europe. In return for the superior labour force, the palm oil, ivory, timber, gold and other commodities which fed and buttressed rising industrialism, they received the worst type of trade gin and meretricious articles ". 106

A one-time colonial ruler in Nigeria and Uganda said the following of British colonial policy: " the partition of Africa was due primarily to the economic necessity of increasing the supplies of raw materials and food to meet the needs of the industrialised nations of Europe ".¹⁰⁷ As a consequence untold sufferings were imposed on the Africans, the worst of which came from the Belgians who occupied Congo, where women and children were compelled under penalty of death to work for the Belgian colonialists. Most of the women and children died in Belgian prisons and the rest made targets for revolver practice, ¹⁰⁸ after all that is civilization.

A one-time French Congo official, an agent of the pogrom, wrote , " The dead, we no longer count them. The villages, horrible charnel-houses, disappear in this yawning gulf. A thousand diseases follow in our footsteps And this martyrdom continues.... We white men shut our eyes not to see the hideous

106. K.O.Dike. Trade and Politics in the Niger Delta.Oxford Uni. Press. London 1956, p. 114

107. Sir Frederick Lugard. The Dual Mandate in British Tropical Africa.William Blackwood. London 1923, p. 613

108. E.D.Morel. The Black Mans Burden.Modern Reader. Monthly Review press. New York 1969, p. 134

dead, the dying who curse us, and the wounded who implore, the weeping women and the starving children. We must stop our ears not to hear the lamentations, the cries, the maledictions which rise from every foot of land, from every tuft of grass. " 109 Reading through the history of colonialism, one sees that the words of the famous Greek philosopher, Heraclitus, who once said that war is the father of all things, the king of all things. It makes some people gods, others human beings, others slaves, others free men". 110

The colonization of Africa was neither for humanitarian reasons nor did the Africans ask for it, but was initiated due to economic, political, socialpsychological situation of Europe and her people at the time. 111 Economic, in order to supply raw materials to the growing home industries and at the same time create a demand for industrial products and inferior goods in the colonies. Some nations scrambled for colonies for prestigious purpose, some for strategic reasons and others for mere economic reasons. In many cases all these factors come together and serve as a motivational force and justification for subjugating races and peoples.

The British in Nigeria accepted the native rulers and laws as authentic as long as these served British interests. With the system of indirect rule, whereby the British colonizers ruled through the native rulers and laws, short-sighted rulers, who were few years ago selling into slavery their own people, declaring wars on their neighbours, and worse still, were in no way a match to the British. On the other hand, the few educated ones, more broad-minded, more nationalistic, who saw the evils of colonization and the plight of the people were disregarded by the native rulers and the British colonizers. The indirect rule

109. Ibid. p. 138

110. Heraklit. Hrsg. H. Diels, Fragmente der Vorsokratiker, Hamburg 1957, p. 53

111. R. von Albertini, Moderne Kolonialgeschichte, Berlin 1970, p. 23 ff

created more division in the country; division between the native rulers and the native elites, ¹¹³ division between the rulers and the ruled, (since the rulers served British interests) ¹¹⁴ successfully, Britain divided in order to rule. The indirect rule system created more divisions in the already existing divisions created by colonialism itself in the first place, by setting the native rulers against the native elites who had grown impatient of British domination, ¹¹² and native rulers against the ruled, since the rulers tended to serve the interests of the colonial government.¹¹³ At last, Britain succeeded in creating more divisions to the already existing ones by setting the people against one another, dividing the people politically according to the old tribal origins and thereby renewing old wounds, and by allowing despotic rulers who served their interests to remain in power.

112. R.von Albertini. Dekolonisation. Die Diskussion über Verwaltung und Zukunft der Kolonien 1919 - 1960, Köln 1966, p. 159

113. F. Oluwa Awogu. Political Institutions and Thought in Africa, New York 1975, p.111

The British from every indication played down the personal and national aspirations of the Nigerian elites of preindependence; people who they trained presuming that they would later come to serve their interests. As fortune had it, these turned out to be the people through which the masses came to understand the exploitive and dehumanising policies of the British colonial administration and its discrimination against the Nigerians. As a result the colonialist discredited and neglected the elites. If the British had continued with their diplomacy of setting the people against one another, or by creating classes which in this case they seem to have forgotten, Nigerian independence could have possibly been achieved later than Nigeria had it. If they had shared power with these elites, and created ruling class out of them, Nigeria could have been a different country today. The very fact that they invented indirect rule where they were ruling through men who would only do what they ordered, made the administration all the more unpopular, as Chief Odumegwu Ojukwu puts it: " The direct empire was transformed into an indirect empire, that regime of fraud and exploitation which African nationalists aptly describe as Neo-colonialism ".¹¹⁴

No doubt, the British encouraged the education of Nigerians as far as they knew that it would serve their colonial interests. Unfortunately for them, this turned out to be a boomerang, thus a disappointment to them as the following statement indicates: (a statement made by Sir Hugh Clifford, then Governor in the Nigerian Council, who had the following to say on the 29th Dec. 1920 about Nigerian elites) " It can only be described as farcical to suppose that continental Nigeria can be represented by a handful of gentlemen drawn from a half-dozen coast towns-men born and bred in British administered towns have pursued their studies under British teachers, in British schools, in order

114. Emeka Ojukwu: The Ahiara Declaration: Markpress Geneva
1969, p. 15

to enable them become ministers of the Christian religion or learned in the laws of England, whose eyes are fixed, not upon African native history or tradition or policy nor upon their own tribal obligations and duties to their natural rulers whose immemorial customs would impose on them but upon political theories evolved by Europeans to fit a wholly different environment". 115 On the idea of Nigeria's Nationhood, he had the following to say: " Assuming that the impossible were feasible that this collection of self-contained and mutually independent native states, separated from one another, as many of them are, by great distances, by differences of history and traditions, and by ethnological, racial, tribal, political, social and religious barriers, were indeed capable of being welded into a single homogenous nation .. a deadly blow would thereby be struck at the very root of national self-government in Nigeria, which secures to each separate people the right to maintain its identity, its individuality, its own chosen form of government, and peculiar political and social institutions which have been evolved for it by the wisdom and by the accumulated experience of generations of its forebears ". 116 Such ideas could serve as a summary of the British assessment of the Nigerian peoples and elites, their aspirations and their future. The discrimination, underassessment and disregard of the Nigerians and their situation made the Nigerians ever more eager to achieve independence from the British colonial rule. This collective struggle made the people in a way nationally and politically conscious and made them neglect many of their differences.

115. Address by the Governor of Nigerian Council,
29th Dec. 1920. in: Michael Crowder. The Story of
Nigeria. London 4th ed. p. 209

116. Michael Crowder. *ibid.*

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THE CREATION OF NIGERIA

Nigeria, as a political entity, came into being in its present form on January 1st. 1914 with the amalgamation of the two British protectorates of Northern and Southern Nigeria by Sir Frederick Lugard, the then Governor of the Northern protectorate, who declared to the people in the following words without any consultation of the people concerned: " His Majesty the King (King George V) has decided that from today all the country from the Sea to near the desert in North, and from the French Country in the west to the Terman Kameruns in the East, shall be one single country under one Governor General, so that there may be no jealousy or rivalry between the North and the South and all may cooperate together for the advancement of peace and prosperity. His Majesty has seen to appoint me, Sir F. Lugard, as Governor-General and by the help of God I trust that I may be enabled to obtain wisdom to discharge this responsible task worthily. It will be my earnest endeavour to promote peace and justice for all men, to protect every man in the observance of his own religious faith and to administer equal justice alike for great and small. The Southern Provinces, hitherto called Southern Nigeria, will be under the immediate charge of Mr. Boyle, C.M.G. as Lieutenant-Governor, and the Northern provinces under Mr. Temple C.M.G. as Lieutenant Governor, and the colony of Lagos under Mr. James C.M.G. as Administrator. These three high officers will be under my orders. The colony of Lagos will be heretofore have a legislative council, whose functions will be limited to the colony. There will also be a council for Nigeria upon which the Europeans holding the highest offices in Nigeria will have seats and also unofficial Europeans and natives representing each part of Nigeria. These will be nominated by me. There will also be an Executive Council consisting of the Principal Officers of the Administration to assist the Governor-General

117

117. Kirk Greene A.H.M. Lugard and the Amalgamation of Nigeria

A documentary record. Frank Cass, London 1968, pp.27 f

with their advice. There will be a supreme court in Nigeria and Sir Edwin Speed is appointed chief Justice of Nigeria. I trust that as one united country Nigeria will increase in prosperity and wealth, and its people in happiness".

So did Nigeria come to being without any consultation of the people to be ruled nor any serious consideration of their Ways of life, cultures and Traditions and their inherent differences. Many Southerners heard first of the Northerners (Hausas and Fulanis) from the British and vice versa. Peoples were therefore indirectly forced to build a Nation without knowing why they should build one Nation or unite. The Amalgamation was therefore seen by Nigerians, as it was meant to be, a device or instrument for the pursuit of British colonial interests.

Ofcourse this went without much appreciation on the part of Nigerians themselves who brought about many resentments. The Muslim Northern Nigeria for example, a calm sea for the British Administrators who ruled indirectly through the Emirs, where District Officers and not the Supreme Court were invested with wide judicial powers, these and several other practices gave rise to abuses. A System the Southerners feared would be introduced in the South through the Amalgamation of the two former Protectorates. Such fear was substantiated when a German newspaper, " Deutsche Kolonialzeitung ", published an alleged Report saying that the British Administration in Nigeria had the intention of introducing the Northern Nigeria System of Administration into the South. ¹¹⁸

The resentment and anger of many Nigerians were shown in many Nigeria newspapers. Most prominent among the editorial comments was one made by the " Nigerian Chronicle ", criticising the idea of introducing this System into the South it read: " A union of name does not mean or involve a union of customs and manners ". ¹¹⁹

118. Kirk Greene a.a.O. p. 20

119. Nigerian Chronicle: 23rd. Jan.1914: apud:Kirk Greene a.a.O. p.22

The evil in this system was that it created classes in the society, set communities against communities; actually the same tactics they used to enhance and pursue the slave trade buying off Leaders and Chiefs, and setting them against their own people, and at the same time using them as instruments. Towards the middle of 1914, "The Times" of Nigeria carried an article titled "The Hidden meaning" which hinted that the Lugards amalgamation was synonymous with a sell-out of the South, a subjugation of Southern Nigeria by Northern Nigeria. So there were fears and rumors that the Northern Nigerian system, laws and administration would be imposed in the South.¹²⁰ Such fears and the consequent reactions clearly indicate the contempt the Southerners had for the northern administrative system of the colonial time and the World-view of the Northerners. The slave trade which brought about the "exportation" of millions of Nigerian peoples into Europe and America was in the first place due to the great disunity among the people and the lack of self- and racial awareness and mutual interests, which the European traders quickly exploited, at the same time encouraging wars among the people and inducing the Chiefs to be more despotic than they were before the contact with European traders.¹²¹

African disunity could rightly be said to be a precondition for the slave trade and the colonization of the continent, and of course existence of such evils before the outside contact, but it in no way suggests that such practices never existed in the other continents. One should not lose sight of the fact that Britain imposed authority in Nigeria through the military conquest and the lack of self-awareness among the people. On the other way round, who are the majority of the British soldiers who do the real fighting if not the Africans recruited, trained and armed to kill their fellow Africans. So one could say that the British used the Nigerians to subdue Nigeria and her peoples, to promote their own economic and territorial ambitions.¹²²

121. Hatch John. Nigeria a history: Secker and Warburg, London 1971, p. 84

122. Ibid. p. 144 f

The unification of the two protectorates exposed the inherent differences among the people, to such an extent that the presence of the British as a sort of unifying force was at the same time a reason for a Nigerian unity to eliminate this presence. In spite of that the unification was unpopular, as one could infer from the statement of the late Sardauna of Sokoto during the crisis of 1953, when he was alleged to have said in the house of Representatives - " The Mistake of 1914 has come to light ". Such views could be in line with earlier statements made by some Northern Emirs of Katsina and Zaria during a conference in Ibadan in 1950, where the two were alleged to have said that unless the northern Provinces were allocated 50% of the seats in the proposed central House of Representatives they would ask for a separation from the rest of Nigeria. 123

The Protectorates of Nigeria were products and consequences of European rivalry in Africa, mainly between Britain, France and Germany, who as a result carved out and divided the continent arbitrarily according to their various economic interests. 124 One could as one of the reasons for the amalgamation of Nigeria mention the financial problems the colonial Government had in running the North, quite unlike in the South where the colonial Government realized many revenues from the import of inferior type of wine, more-over the Government in the North lacked adequate staff. For these and other economic reasons, the two British Protectorates in Nigeria were united. 125

123. Kirk Greene. a.a.O. p.2

124. Backwell H.F. The occupation of Hausaland 1900 - 1904.

Being a translation of Arabic letters
found in the house of the Wazir of Sokoto;
Bohariin 1903. Frank Cass and Co.Ltd.
London 1969, p.2

125. Kirk Greene. a.a.O. p. 58 f

THE DEVELOPMENT OF NIGERIAN NATIONALISM:

The 1st. World war of 1914 brought many Nigerians in contact with the outside world for the first time. This contact brought about an important development in the self-awareness of many Nigerians, and a demythologization of the white man, especially the Englishman. One could compare these Nigerians with the men in a cave or rather a dark hole in " Platos Republic ", who once climbed out of their holes, to discover that they had been living in a world of darkness, left many years ago by the people they met outside the hole in which they were born. Nigerian soldiers fought in many parts of the World, and were renowned for their bravery and discipline. As Fortune made it, these men came in contact with Europeans, particularly British soldiers who were not officers but ' Private ' soldiers, who were semi-skilled, farmers and servants. They therefore realized that all the Europeans were not like the privileged ones in colonial administration, who could have equally been farmers or domestic servants in their home countries. Such experience surely disturbed the colonial administration in Nigeria, as a letter written by Lugard to his wife suggests, referring to the Nigerian soldiers he said: " He also knows how to kill white men, around whom he has been taught to wave a web of sanctify of life. He also knows how to handle bombs and Lewis guns and Maxims and he has seen white men budge when he stood fast. And altogether he has acquired much knowledge which might be put to uncomfortable use some day. 126

Another important external feature that swelled up Nigerian national awareness among many Nigerians, was the contact with other black people from several parts of Africa and America, people who were more enlightened and understood better the exploitation and oppression inherent in colonial policies and the best way to combat them. Among these people were some of the freed slaves then in Sierra Leone and Liberia, who later came into the country to help their backward fellow Africans. Christian and

126. Michael Crowder. a.a.O. pp. 20 ff, 221

humanitarian organizations played a large role in helping the Africans understand what was happening around them and in the world. Nigerian selfconsciousness took a new shape with the rise of many Nigerian students Unions and Organisations. The Nigerian Youth Movement founded in 1936 gearded up to a national movement with the return of Nnamdi Azikiwe in 1937 and then to the formation of the N.C.N.C. which led in the criticism of Sir A.Richards constitutional proposals for the country. 127

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NIGERIAN INDEPENDENCE:

Nigeria won her independence from Britain on Oct. 1st. 1960, a time when many Nigerians even politicians, never fully understood what independence implied. It was generally understood as a replacement of a white administrator with a black native administrator. The very idea of replacement or change of administrators did not mean a change of administration or system, because the postindependence politicians continued with the system and political ideologies propounded by the British. Thus Nigeria remained for many years after her independence in many ways dependent on Britain and on many other European countries. In spite of these sad aspects one has to give credit to the Nigerian politicians who negated their ethnic, ideological and religious differences to fight for a common national purpose; a hope for Nigerian unity,

After independence, the western region of Nigeria introduced free education in 1957. In the east where the missionaries were very active, especially in the field of education, within a few years, there was an influx of unemployed men and women. These eventually had to migrate to the towns in search of work and a better standard of living. This influx into the urban areas had one advantage for Nigerian unity, namely, the opportunity it created for Nigerians to come to know, appreciate and understand one another and abandon the

127. Ibid. pp. 217 - 223

cultural ties that excluded others. Unfortunately, the people dwelling in the towns never abandoned all the cultural ties that excluded the other ethnic groups as it soon became clear with the formation of ethnic unions, clubs and political parties. There were in addition wide-spread favoritism, discrimination, abuses of offices and discouragement of interethnic marriages. These were some of the features that characterized the early stage of the new nation. Eventually there came to existence new ties that cut across ethnic ties such as trade unions, sport clubs, social organisations, college unions, political parties and some economic groups. Christian and Islamic religions made great contributions in this regard, in that they helped in giving the people a new feeling of brotherhood which transgressed all ethnic barriers and discriminatory affiliations. Such social development not only undermined the cultural life of the people but also gradually eroded the traditional religion. To foster a strong national unity by breaking discriminatory cultural ties, feelings and barriers was a task facing the post-independence Nigerian government, a task she should not have left to interethnic Organisations and religious communities. We shall later come to see how equipped the Christian churches were and at the present are, in carrying out successfully this task of unifying the Nigerian peoples. This is one of the aims of our work.

THE INFLUENCE OF EUROPEAN CULTURE:

Cultural colonisation implies a destruction or disregard of old values and their replacement with new foreign values, that in many cases not only alienated the people from one another but had no foundation in the life and nature of the people, nor could it promote their self-consciousness and self-determination. One could describe the history of Nigeria before independence and many years after the independence as a history of a people who found themselves in a cultural dilemma, caught between two worlds. People made efforts to identify themselves with this new culture both outwardly and inwardly. Some examples of some outward identity

conflicts was the role of dressing as a symbol. When clothes and dressing no longer serve in the first place the biological needs of man but instead serve as a social symbol, like when one puts on a three piece wool suit under a temperature of about 40 ° C, on top of that a well decent tie. In such a case the dressing no longer serves the biological need of the man, but rather sacrifices his biological needs and convenience for the sake of dressing and the new symbol attached to it. The conflicts brought about by peoples association of roles and status with dressing, more especially in post-independence Nigeria, have been depicted in their embarrassing nature in some Nigerian literature.

Chinua Achebe, as an example, narrates in his novel that the Umuofia Progressive Union Lagos Branch was offended by the way Obi, a young man who returned from England after his studies, was dressed up at a reception organised in his honour. Achebe had the following to narrate:

" Everybody was properly dressed in " agbada" or in European suit except the guest of honour, who appeared in his shirt-sleeves because of the heat. That was Obi's mistake number one. Everybody expected a young man from England to be impressively turned Out ".¹²⁸

Wole Soyinka writes a satire about a Nigerian, whom he named Ayo, married to a British woman, with whom he once went to an African party, an occasion which Soyinka used to contrast the man's mentality and values with that of the wife's, by narrating a conversation between them.

" Darling, (says the man) if the Queen was attending a garden party, would you go dressed without your gloves? I've said I am sorry, Ayo. I really am. Perhaps I had better return home. But would you answer my question. Would you attend the same party with the Queen without gloves? I really don't know Ayo. I never moved in such

128. Chinua Achebe. No Longer at Ease. London 1960, p. 31

circles. Darling, I am surprised at you. These are simple requirements of society which any intelligent person should know ". 129

Names played a large role in the life of the peoples of Nigeria. They not only depict the circumstances and history surrounding the birth of a person, but also the significance and values attached to the birth and the person born. Nwankwo narrates a baptism scene, where a man was advised in view of the baptism to take a new name.

" What name would I use, said Danda (the baptisimal candidate), it is hard to know. Some people call me Danda, others Rain. This is different, said the catechist. You must take an (oibo) english name or the name of a saint. You are talking, said Danda glancing expressively at the people around. Take Peter, Danda, one of them said take Michael. Do not listen to them. Take John. Write down whatever you like. I will choose for him, the catechist told Father Royde. Danda, you will be Robinson. The choice was loudly applauded. Robinson Arabs, the catechist recorded the name ".130

These and many examples go to show that the Nigerians colonised themselves mentally, using the white man as an instrument, and who was in turn pleased with this development which he had earlier encouraged. In view of the fact that many Africans are presently torn between two worlds, one would agree with Awosika when he says that:

" If the people of Africa can have their own distinctive values; if they can define for themselves their own needs and adhere to these; if they can know exactly when their

129. Wole Soyinka : The Interpreters. London 1972, p. 40 f

130. Nkem Nwankwo: Danda. London 1970, p. 73 f

peoples have been well fed, well housed, well clothed, well adorned, well entertained; being fully conscious of what they need as a people and what they can best afford, from their own resources and reserves, they are likely to feel happy and contented and accept their lot; they can then surge forwards together as a nation."¹³¹

Many African nations, when confronted with the dualism of going west or east, Socialism or Capitalism, no longer remember that these are foreign ideologies with limited applications, developed under a given situation and workable under certain conditions. While one could suggest that African nations including Nigeria should develop their own political and economic systems, one should not lose sight of the fact that there are various forms of socialism and capitalism. Just as a Ghanaian puts it:

" If by adopting a Ghanaian Capitalism we can solve our problems and develop, I do not see anything wrong with it: Likewise if we develop a Ghanaian Socialism".¹³²

Many Nigerians were confronted by the dualism created not only by the conflicting cultural values (native and foreign) but also by the falling moral standards of value in political and economic social life. That Nigerians were tired of such ills, a consequence of the adaptation of foreign values, was demonstrated by the way Nigerians applauded the military takeover of 1966; and their general disappointment at the assassination of Gen. Muritala Mohammed, whom many believed could have put an end to bribery, nepotism and other social evils that hindered Nigerian unity and freedom of the people. ¹³³ The future of the Christian churches in Nigeria rests therefore on their relevance to the people and to their problems, for instance the reconciliation of the people with their culture and the present age and its demands e.g. unity and selflessness.

131. Awosika V.O. An African Meditation.Lagos. African Literary and Scientific publications. 1967, p. 212

132. Iddirisu A. No Foreign Ideology. The Legon Observer vol. 6 28th June 1973, p. 280

133. Crowder Michael. a.a.O. p. 283

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THE NIGERIAN CIVIL WAR:

Many people who followed closely the political and social events of the 1950s and early 1960s in Nigeria would definitely tend to say that the civil war of 1967 was a logical necessity. A logical conclusion, which had its premises in the cultural, social and economic differences existing among the various ethnic groups of the nation, which in normal circumstances should have been utilized in building up a strong united nation with rich and diverse experiences. Instead, such diversities of experiences were used in making and creating an ethnic absolutism, whereby the ethnic groupings for one reason or another came to see themselves superior to another, which consequently led to the creation of a "pseudo-species", as some psychologists would put it.

The Igbos felt themselves superior to the Hausas, and the Hausas looked down upon the Igbos as heathens and non-believers (the Hausas were mainly Moslems); the Yorubas disregarded the Igbos and Hausas because of their early contacts with Western civilization which made them in a way ahead of other ethnic groups; the Igbos on the other way round saw the Yorubas as mere cowards and anti-socials. On top of all this, Nigeria was not blessed with rulers who would bridge these destructive diversities, rulers who could have changed these destructive views and opinions into constructive views, which would have contributed to the building of the nation. The politicians and rulers instead not only used these diversities in carving out a "pseudo identity consciousness", but also to come into power, coming even to rule Nigeria they saw as a means of enriching themselves and their ethnic groups -thus the civil war, a war which contributed a lot towards Igbo feelings of cultural identity, unity (thousands of Igbos were killed in N.Nigeria) and self-determination.

To the best of our knowledge, one cause of the Nigerian Civil War can not be far from the fact that Nigerians saw European Countries as ideals and measures on which they had to model their development. In other words, Nigeria took Europe as a

standard and thereby neglected the real needs and interests of her people. The politicians simply replaced the British colonialists in their occupation of neglecting the people's interests. Politicians in pursuit of power became insensitive to the sufferings of the people. ¹³⁴ The Nigerian political system was in every aspect British and the laws and institutions were made and defined in European terms. The educational system was in all aspects British and colonial in nature. The political leaders, former nationalists who were often ridiculed by the British and termed inefficient in politics and jurisdiction, ¹³⁵ must have understood politics and jurisdiction as it was defined and practiced by the British but were unaware of their inherent particularity to British or European history and people. It could therefore not work or be applied word by word in Nigeria. Perhaps in order to show the European world that they could equally rule themselves and handle political matters, they therefore became very faithful to the laws laid down by the British. Over and above this, they became corrupt by assuming that positions of power were springboards to acquiring wealth, ¹³⁶ thus the joy and outburst of national enthusiasm over the military coup in January of 1966. ¹³⁷ What would we say if one argues that various ethnic affiliations were both the immediate and the remote cause of the Nigerian Civil War?

Undoubtedly, feelings of nationalism is a development which starts from feelings and a sense of belonging and responsibility towards one's family clan, village and ethnic or regional group, but it must not follow this system or sequence especially where one under-

134. Okwudiba Nnoli: Nigerian: Dilemma of Nationhood: An african Analysis of the Biafran Conflict: edited by Joseph Okpaku: Greenwood Publishing Co: New York (1972) p. 120 ff.

135. Michael Crowder: The Story of Nigeria: faber and faber London 1978, p. 220

136. Charles Perry Trumbull: The Soviet Union and the Nigerian Civil War: Policy; Ideology and Propaganda. University Microfilms, A xerox Co. Michigan 1973, p. 45

137. Okwudiba Nnoli: Nigerian: Dilemma of Nationhood, p. 121

stands that one's family, village or region cannot do without the Nation which guarantees its well - being. Logically one who loves one's family or village must necessarily therefore love the Nation and identify oneself with the Nation, all for the interest of one's own people whose welfare lies with the welfare of the state. In an administrative system invented by foreigners not meant for political development but for administrative purposes which would eventually facilitate the economic exploitation of the land and people, one would therefore expect problems when this same political system is used for political development and economic progress of the people. With independence in 1960, Nigeria saw the end of independent politicians ie. people (leaders) imposed on the people, who therefore felt themselves independent of the people. In order to be elected one has to show the people that one is going to fight for their own good, one therefore has to come from the particular area or have the sympathy of the people by promising them all one can think of. So, in order to get the votes one has to be regional and this was the most political and logical thing to do.¹³⁸ The politicians therefore felt themselves responsible to their regions instead of to Nigeria, thus saw Nigeria as a "sacrificial" cow to be shared among the people who killed it - a scramble for Nigeria.

Nigerians got the impression from their political rulers, that Nigeria as a nation had to contribute to their individual welfare and not that they themselves had to contribute to the welfare of the nation (or building of a nation) so that the nation would later be able to look after their needs. In the long run, an ethnic and regional solidarity and awareness was built in each region with the sole aim of exploiting Nigeria and her peoples and furthering the political and economic powers of the individual politicians. The people therefore became instruments in the hands of their leaders, as one could vividly see in the massacre of the

138. Moyibi Amoda: History, Thought and Action in Nigeria.
Dilemma of Nationhood p. 171

Igbos by civilians in 1966 in Northern Nigeria. Ethnic consciousness, a healthy phenomenon, was later used to the detriment of the nation since it could not see itself as a part of the nation, or a contributor to the welfare of the nation.

Since Nigeria was more meaningful at the time of independence to many British citizens than to many Nigerian citizens, one could therefore see the position of the politicians and administrators, wholly dependent on a people who had not the interest of Nigeria as a nation at heart, a feeling which the politicians later on misused, since there was little or no contact between the various groups or ethnic regions before the colonial rule. One could therefore not talk of hatred or animosity between the peoples. During the British rule they all had one aim, namely, to expel the British, and therefore could not have engaged in fighting one another, despite several misunderstandings. In short, there was no historical account that could have given rise to ethnicism, regionalism or what some people choose to call tribalism, other than the politically unwise and derimental ambitions and visions of the politicians.

We may therefore say that the cause of the Nigerian civil war may not necessarily be due to ethnic affiliations, but due to the political system inherited by Nigerians ¹³⁹ (regional parliamentary government) and the inordinate political ambition and visions of politicians who meant to serve their individual interests and the interests of their various regions. The identity and regional consciousness achieved by such means cannot be helpful as a step to national identity and consciousness, since its ultimate end is the interest of the region or ethnic origin. Nevertheless, it could still be helpful in building up a national identity consciousness and awareness when they are taken analogically as examples in building a national consciousness.

If we agree that the 1966 civil crises and killings and the eventual war were all due to lack of interethnic understanding and the lack of appreciation of the common interests of Nigerians,

139. Moyibi Amoda: a.a.O. p. 172

coupled with the false alarm from politicians of an imaginary immediate threat, we shall therefore ask ourselves the question; how far and by that effort the present government is undertaking to promote inter-ethnic understanding and to highlight the many common interests and experiences of Nigerians instead of their differences ? Nigeria could build a strong nation by first promoting ethnic and interethnic consciousness and respect and understanding as a step to nationhood and identity. That is exactly the aim of our work: to see the challenges of Igbo identity as a step and a necessary condition to Nigerian identity and national awareness, where the Igbos, just like every other ethnic group in Nigeria, have to give up their particular interests which may conflict with or jeopardize national interests at large.

One need not forget that the war brought about a national consciousness on both sides; the awareness to keep the nation safe from the ills that brought about the civil war, ¹⁴⁰ thus the new constitution and the civilian rule of 1979. A lesson which one could draw from the crisis and war is the danger of any sort of inequality, be it social, economic, educational or otherwise. The Southerners, more especially the Igbos and Yorubas, felt that they should dominate the country because they supplied the very needed manpower through education ¹⁴¹ which, due to the fault of the Northerners themselves, could not be supplied from this region. So the government must encourage people to work hard, distribute all social economic and political assets and duties according to population and efficiency. The political maturity thermometer, with which one could measure the equality and national consciousness of Nigerians, is the appointment of the most qualified people (Nigerians) to high posts of great responsibility in spite of their ethnic or primordial ¹⁴² origin, or sex.

140. Ogbemi Ola Omatete: The Security of the Nigerian Nation
Nigerian, Dilemma of the Nationhood p. 29 f

141. Victor P. Diejomaoh; The Economics of the Nigerian conflict
Nigeria - Dilemma of Nationhood p. 320

142. Joseph Okpaku. Nigeria Today
Nigeria Dilemma of Nationhood a.e.O. p. 374

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CONCLUSION

We have tried to show that the acceptance of a pluralistic nature of reality is a necessary step towards the acceptance of reality or truth, which could loose at any time its authenticity, the moment the conditions and premises that justified its authenticity cease to exist or are displaced by others. We have seen that geographical and physical features do not create in Nigeria enough wide varieties as to give rise to very remarkable differences in climate, human life and culture. From all we have seen with regards to the history of the black people, one could say that Africa had in the ancient times a glorious and advanced civilization. The rest of the world spoke well of them, their land was regarded as the home of the gods, they were said to be the most glorious of all men and the cradle of civilization.

Nigeria has a share of this history, since a large number of her people immigrated from the very regions designated as the site of the ancient kingdoms of Africa or rather the black world. Moreover, modern archaeology is proving the fact that such ancient glorious of the black people was not restricted to the blacks who dwelled in the northern and east-central part of Africa, but stretched southwards to include the builders of the walls of Zimbabwe.

A close look at the ethnic groups reveals wide differences in the aspects of life and culture, differences which were promoted and exploited by both the British colonial government and the local pre- and post-colonial rulers. Differences existed because the various ethnic groups had no common history or experience which could serve as a basis or reason to unify. Modern Nigeria does no longer lack this common history and experience, which were made available to her on account of her pre- and post-colonial history and rulers, and the mistakes, mismanagements and the wide-spread dishonesty and indiscipline of the post-colonial era.

We saw the sad effects of colonialism and the condition under

which Nigeria was created by the British, a nation which then to Nigerians themselves. There is no doubt that the people saw the unification of the various ethnic groups of Nigeria as an organ of the British colonial government to enable them to exploit the land. The citizens and the rulers of Nigeria unconsciously replaced the British exploitation of the unity for ethnic interests, in other words, Nigeria was seen by many Nigerians as a "no man's land", a means of enriching oneself and uplift one's ethnic group. This false notion of Nigeria as a nation and the love and dedication which only very few had for her, gave rise to the civil war of 1967-1970, costing Nigeria thousands of lives.

We now ask, have Nigerians not enough evidence and experience which could prove that Nigerians must unite in order to survive as a nation and as individuals? The answer is of course - yes; Nigerians have learnt their lesson, but that is not enough, it is not enough for one to know one's mistakes and make up one's mind to avoid it in the future, without knowing exactly the very root of the mistakes. We believe that the cause of the Nigerian woes is nothing other than a deep-rooted disregard for one another and a very narrow sense of neighbourhood. In order to encourage and promote a deep-rooted regard and appreciation of one another, we suggest a revaluation of the traditional religion of Nigeria, which teaches that God created all mankind, and wishes the happiness and dignity of all mankind. Definitely, one cannot hope to have His favour, if one is working against the favour of any His creatures. In the next chapter, we shall have a brief review of the traditional religion of Nigeria as an essential part of her culture.

CHAPTER TWO

NIGERIAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION

One of the main causes of the present problems of today's Nigerian and her past woes comes from Nigerians themselves, namely, the tendency to discriminate against the other with whom one does not have much in common; a devastating narrow sense of neighbourhood and justice. We believe that religion is in the position to bridge the gap between individuals, peoples and ideologies, by letting people be aware of the evil and dangers of a life geared towards self-interest, a life which does not seek the interest of the general community and the nation at large. We believe that religion has the duty of making man more human, by encouraging an unlimited regard and respect for one's fellow man irrespective of one's social, religious, cultural and ideological point of view; one is human when one is sensitive to the feelings, the need for freedom and self-realization of one's fellow man; these facts presuppose a man who is already aware of the fact that he has to act in freedom, dignity and self awareness in order to achieve self-realization and contentment.

We shall later come to review the Nigerian traditional religion to see if it is in the position of meeting the above ends.

2.1,1 What is religion ?

Any attempt to define religion may come to be not only a restriction of various, unending religious manifestations but also of infinite being, who is the object of religion; in other words, the spirit of religion, no matter which, can never be given a clear-cut definition, just as one cannot give religion clear-cut definitions. There may be as many definitions of religion as there are experiences, beliefs, cultures, knowledge and ideologies. The very fact that religion is to a large extent a matter of experi-

perience, makes it difficult to be communicated. As a result, many people confessing the same faith may come to give different definitions of religion. Such consideration does not intend to suggest that one cannot say for certain what religion consists of. As a matter of common experience, the infinite being or (beings) is the object of religion, an act which presupposes a human being, more limited and less absolute, and in some cases, a non-existence of an infinite being, but rather the existence of an infinite, absolute and more glorious state, which men are capable of attaining. One can therefore talk of theistic and atheistic religion, all having the uplifting of man as well as the good of man as their ultimate purpose.

In various cultures - more especially among the people of old, religion has a very strong social-communal function and meaning, regulating inter-personal and supernatural communication. For the Igbos of Nigeria, just like many other peoples of Nigeria, do not make a clear-cut demarkation between religion and other parts of culture. The Igbos call religion "Omenala", meaning tradition. Like many people of Africa, the Igbos do not have a particular name for religion, just as it is not separated from other aspects of life and is moreover the centre of culture. For many peoples of Africa, and Nigeria in particular, religion gives a taste to culture just like salt seasons a soup. Religion is also a means of maintaining the cosmic order and harmony, and it is widely believed that it was handed over to man from the deities and the ancestors.

Among other peoples of the world, like the Chinese, religion is referred to as "teaching" - "Chiao"; the Indians call it "dharma", meaning, the stable world order, the godly world order. The Arabians and the Persians call it "din", the godly regulation, that, which one ought to do in honour of the gods; this later on came to mean custom and legal acts, a self-abandonment or dedication to the prescribed laws of the gods. Islam, according to Mohammed, has to restore the "din" of God entrusted to Abraham; therefore adherents to the restored laws of God, must have to

dedicate themselves to the prescribed laws of God (Allah), thus Islam - the total abandonment to God. ¹

From all we have seen, religion presupposes an existing cosmic order, with prescribed laws, customs and traditions believed to have been handed over to men by the gods or by some superhuman agents, who are responsible for order and continuity in the world. Religion is often regarded as a means of preserving this harmony.

Religion, according to Schleiermacher, is the act of seeing the whole existence as the work of God, an infinite whole with which religion seeks a connection. ² In seeking and preserving this relationship between man and this unending whole, through order and continuity, religion determines all aspects of community life but its system and function is dependent on the community's social system and environment. ³ That means that every religion is relevant to the problems, situation and the culture of the people who practice own the religion, in other words, for a relationship between the superhuman and man to be really a religion, it has to be relevant to the problems, needs and interests of the people.

According to Süderblom, the religions of the world reveal a sort of unity, in that each and every one of them has a share in God's self-revelation and continues to seek evermore this living God. God reveals Himself wherever people seek Him with open hearts. ⁴ The question is, why do people seek Him and why do they need Him? They seek Him because they need Him and they need Him because of the experience they have of Him. He is not something which one could possess but rather a reality which possess and destines the life of man, as it was commonly believed as people never thought of the freedom He gave to mankind.

1. Anton Grabner-Haider. Ethos und Religion. Mainz 1984, p.22

2. Friedr. Schleiermacher. Über die Religion. F.Meiner, Hamburg 1958, p. 32

3. Niklas Luhmann. Funktion der Religion. Suhrkamp. Frankfurt am Main 1977, pp. 50/51

4. Friedrich Heiler. Der Lebendige Gott im Zeugnis der Religionsgeschichte. E.Reinhardt, München 1966, p.XX

2.1,2 The Functions of Religion

Mankind naturally does away with any act that is irrelevant to his needs or has no function in his everyday life. The very fact that religion which is as old as human reason remains till today an indispensable factor of people's life and culture shows that religion is relevant to mankind and has functions. Quite unlike normal human acts, one does not stand above religion or use religion as an instrument (where religion is honestly practised), but rather one submits oneself to the ordinances of a religion. Under such circumstances, religion influences politics, society and culture, but when one asks how religion came into being, one finds that religion has much to do with human experience. As Thomas F.O.'Dea puts it, religion is concerned with " the aspects of experience which transcend the mundane events of everyday existence - that is, as involving belief in and a response to some kind of beyond. Hence religion becomes of sociological significance precisely in those areas of human life where knowledge and skill fail to provide the needed means of adaptation, or mechanisms of adjustment." ⁵ When man distinguishes the empirical world from the non-empirical world, he discovers that the empirical world is dependent on the non-empirical world and reality, which is the object of religion; the human experiences which transcend the mundane events of everyday existence. Religion can therefore be said to be the human consciousness of an absolute reality on which mankind is dependent. ⁶ What does man gain from this consciousness of an absolute being, or the experience that transcends the mundane events of everyday life ?

" Religion identifies the individual with his group, supports him in uncertainty, consoles him in disappointment, attaches him to society's goals, enhances morale, and provides him with elements of identity it supplies the basic ground guaranteeing the

5. Thomas F.O.'Dea. The Sociology of Religion. Prentice Hall, NJ, 66, p. 13

6. Paul Schebesta. Ursprung der Religion. Morus, Berlin 1960 p.41

meaningfulness of human life and effort, and offers an outlet for expressive needs, ... supports human discipline".⁷

An important aspect of a functional theory is to find out the universal nature and essence of religion, which could be relevant to every other religion, a functional theory of cultural analysis common to some anthropologists.⁸

There are, however, men who have endeavoured to identify some universals of religions in general, including their functions, essence and origin. Examples of such men are:

I. Kant

The corner-stone of Kant's philosophy of religion is the belief that everything that man, apart from a moral way of life, believes himself to be capable of doing to please God is mere religious delusion and pseudo-worship of God.⁹

Morality needs neither the idea of another being above man for man to recognize his duty nor another motive apart from the law obliging him to fulfil his duty; in other words, morality does not need religion for morality's sake.¹⁰

Kant recognizes only one religion, but many different religious creeds, which give rise to the apparently divers religions. He believes that it is more appropriate to say - this man is of the religion of the Jews, or of the Mohammedan or Christian religious creeds, than to say - he is of this or that religion,¹¹ because religion is for him the acknowledgement of our duties as Godly commandments.¹² Kant believed that one can be truly religious without sharing the creed of any organized religion.

7. Thomas F.O.' Dea. a.a.O. p. 16 - 17

8. Bronislaw Malinowski. Eine wissenschaftliche Theorie der Kultur. Suhrkamp, Frankfurt am Main 1975, p. 19

9. I. Kant. Die Religion innerhalb der Grenzen der bloßen Vernunft. Hermann Noack, Hamburg 1956, p. 191

10. Ibid., p.3

11. S. Körner. Kant. penguin bks., Middlesex 1979, p. 170

12. I. Kant. Die Religion a.a.O. p. 170

G.W.F. Hegel

According to Hegel, philosophy and religion are the same thing, with reference to their common object, namely, the infinite, and can therefore not be science in the normal use of the word. ¹³ Philosophy and religion have this true reality, which contains the whole existence, namely, God, as their only object, not only in ideas or thoughts but also in the manifestation of God (the object) Himself. ¹⁴ Hegel sees religion as the first phase of self-consciousness, the mental consciousness of a people, consciousness of the universal, of the spirit which exists "for and of itself", the consciousness of which depends on the destiny (the absolute spirit manifests Himself in the human history, according to the degree of self-consciousness of a people, and has Christianity as the climax of His self-revelation) He allots in spirit to any people, in order to grasp the truth. He went further to say that religion is the place where a people identifies that which it considers as the truth; the consciousness of a people of that, that is, namely, the nature of the "Highest". For Hegel, a people's idea of God is reflected in their relationship to Him and in what they think of themselves; i.e., religion is the concept of a people about itself. ¹⁵ We have just seen a man who tends to portray himself as a theologian, then philosophy has God as its object, saying that God and religion are products of a people's consciousness. With such ideas, the way has been made open for speculative atheism, a blow at the universal concept of religion, at the freedom of the spirit and at humanity in general, especially on the non-Christian religions. He believes that Christianity liberated the absolute

13. G.W.F. Hegel. Der Begriff der Religion. Bd. 12/1, Lasson, Leipzig 1925, p. 20 f

14. Ibid., B. 32

15. G.W.F. Hegel. Philosophie der Weltgeschichte. Bd. 2, Hoffmeister, Hamburg 1955, p. 125

spirit, which enabled man to be an infinite and totally free being, then, the christian God is purely spirit and man, thus the unity between man and God. ¹⁶ He sees Christianity as the only true religion.

Ludwig Feuerbach

Feuerbach maintains that religion came into being as a result of human feelings of dependence; ¹⁷ inasmuch as man was at first dependent on nature, so also was nature the first object of religion. ¹⁸ Human feelings of dependence on nature are connected to the idea of nature as a living, personal being, with a subjective human nature, ¹⁹ are for him the purpose of offering and the essence of nature-religion. ²⁰

Since human thinking and feelings have an infinite character, they are therefore capable of positing an infinite being. Feuerbach holds that man's belief in God is equivalent to man's belief in the infinity and truthfulness of his own nature, the godly nature, the subjective human nature in its absolute freedom and unlimitedness. ²¹ He holds man and not God as the object of religion, the beginning, the middle-point and the end of religion. ²² Feuerbach sees religion, especially Christianity, as an act of man directed towards man himself; he sees the nature of God as posited by man, as none other than the nature of man himself (man's self-projection) separated from its individuality. Therefore, all attributes of God should be regarded as human attributes. ²³ Feuerbach's thesis on religion is as a result of the misuse of religion in his time; his negative assessment of religion was not

17. L. Feuerbach. Das Wesen der Religion. Bd.1, Leipzig 1946, p.117

18. Ibid., p. 118

19. Ibid., p. 138

20. Ibid., p. 140

21. L. Feuerbach. Das Wesen des Christentums. Bd 6, Hrsg. Bolin/Jodl Stuttgart 1960, p. 222

22. Ibid., p. 17 f

23. Ibid., p. 17 f

only due to its misuse, but also was meant to be a reply to Hegel's idealistic philosophy. ²⁴

Karl Marx

Marx continues with the criticism of Feuerbach, who describes religion as mere human self-projection of man's wishes and needs, for whom man is the highest being, the only God that exists, "Homo homini Deus"; for whom the mystery of theology is anthropology which replaced theology, since - "Homo homini Deus est". ²⁵ Religion, family, state, law, moral, science etc., are for Marx mere special methods of production and fall in line with the laws of production. ²⁶ He believes that natural religion is the consciousness of nature, which man at first encountered as foreign and all-powerful, towards which man behaved like an animal, in other words, an animal-like consciousness of nature. ²⁷

A critique of religion is for him the beginning of all criticism. Man produces religion; religion as the self-consciousness and self-feelings of a man who has not yet come to apprehend himself or has lost himself cannot produce man. The state produces religion, a wrong consciousness of the world due the fact that the state itself is wrong; religion later becomes the general theory of such a world, its logic, moral consciousness, its consolation and justification. A fight against religion is a fight against the society or world whose "aroma" is religion. ²⁸

24. Karl Marx u.F. Engels Werke (MEW) Bd.2, Dietz.Berlin 1976, p.132
ref.L. Feuerbach. Zur Kritik der Hegelschen Philosophie.Bolin/
Jodl, Stuttgart 1959, p.203

25. Walter Kern. Atheismus Marxismus Christentum. Tyrolia,
Innsbruck 1976, p. 50

26. Karl Marx/F.Engels. Über Religion.Dietz,Berlin 1976, p.65

27. MEW. Bd. 3, Berlin (Ost) p. 31

28. Karl Marx/ Friedrich Engels a.a.O., p. 98

Religious misery, according to Marx, is a manifestation of misery in the world as well as a protest against misery in the reality. He sees religion as the sigh of the oppressed creature, the disposition of a heartless world as well as the opium of the people, the halo of the vale of tears.²⁹ We have seen now people who made effort to point out the consequences of the misuse of religion, although they made mistakes in not saying that their theses hold when religion is misused.

Émile Durkheim

Durkheim was first concerned with what religion meant and the role it played in human society.

He saw religion as a social affair, a "social thing" par excellence, which he identified in two spheres, namely, the sacred and the profane. For him, the division of the world into sacred and profane spheres is a characteristic of religious thinking, where everything can be regarded as holy.³⁰

The profane referred to the experience of everyday life, the sacred lies somehow outside everyday usual life. Religious cult helps to integrate the people and creates religious powers (deities), which, according to Durkheim, are the manifestation and personification of the society. The gods could not exist if their worshippers never existed, just as the worshippers could not do without their gods, because these gods symbolise the society, which can neither exist without the individuals nor can the individuals do without it.³¹ Durkheim believes that religious convictions are only expressions of the social life; religious faith and practice are signs of man's dependence on the society, the social life is therefore the religious and the religious ceremonies the glorified social life. He maintains that - the thoughts of men concentrate on their common faith, tradition, remembrance of their ancestors, their collective ideas, the incarnation and, in other words, the social elements, in

29. Ibid., p. 99

30. Émile Durkheim. Elementary Forms of Religious Life. London 1915, p. 37

31. Ibid., p. 347

which every one participates; ³² in the same way is religion an integrating social factor. So, the object of religion is the society; God is only an hypostatization of society, a group or society personified. Religion becomes a sacralization of the traditions, embodying society's requirements for human behaviour, upon which the society stands. The worship of God was therefore seen as the worship of the society, the great entity upon which the individual depends. ³³ This theory of Durkheim is misleading, because individuals exist without belonging to neither an integrated society nor a group but still have a religion.

Sigmund Freud

Freud made an effort to explain the origin, purpose and evolution of religion. He attempted in his book "The Future of an Illusion" to illustrate what an average man understands as religion, dogma and the systems and promises which claim to explain the puzzles of the universe and mankind. Religion with its dogmas attempt to console man with the thought that somebody is caring for him, somebody who will later restore to him in the next world what he missed on earth. ³⁴ Freud lays emphasis on the dangers of tabus, be it on the side of culture or religion; he sees most of social prohibitions as causes of obsessional neuroses. Freud believes in a historical development of human world-views, whereby the animal-phase, where man holds himself as almighty, is replaced with the religious phase, where he surrenders his role as the almighty to the gods but at the same time make efforts through magic, prayers, etc., to influence the gods. The latter is in the course of history displaced by science, which acknowledge neither the almighty power of man nor of gods. ³⁵ Freud sees what he calls "the father complex", the helplessness and the feeling of a need for protection as the nucleus of religious feelings; a feeling, which has God as an elevated father, who looks after man, an infant (adult) phase, which a great number of people never overcome, including philosophers.³⁶

32. Ibid., p. 348

33. Thomas F.O.'Dea. The Sociology of Religion. a.a.O., p.12

34. Sigmund Freud. Das Unbehagen in der Kultur. Studienausgabe Bd. IX, Fischer, Frankfurt am Main 1980, p. 206

35. Sigmund Freud. Totem und Tabu. ibid., p. 376

36. Sigmund Freud. Das Unbehagen in der Kultur. p. 207

This helplessness of an infant which continues into the adult age is what Freud calls the psychoanalytical motive of religious education. Religious dogmas, are illusive and unprovable, and moreover contradict to a large extent the known reality, and should therefore not be forced on any person.³⁷ The God of the faithful is no other than a natureless shadow. Freud's essence of religiousity is not the feelings of helplessness and smallness, but the second step in the process of religiousity, the reaction to the feelings, viz. the seeking of help.³⁸ Religion, mankind's neurosis, the illusion of culture, is comparable to infantile neurosis.

Erich Fromm

Fromm terms the result of the interaction between the individual psychic structure and the social-economic structure, the character of society. In other words, the social-economic structure of a society forms the character of the members of the society, and conversely, the society's character influences the social-economic structure.³⁹ Every change in society's character would imply a change in the social-economic structure and vice versa, or else the change would remain unsuccessful.⁴⁰ Fromm believes that society has the responsibility of fulfilling the religious requirements of its individuals. He understands religion as a given system of thinking and behaviour which offers the individual a frame-work of orientation as well as an object of devotion. It follows that there can be no society with an idea of the past, the present and the future without religion. Religion is something more than the sum of the doctrines and convictions, it is the character structure of the individuals. People's religious beliefs form an aspect of their character structure as well as that of the society, when religion is propagated by the society; because people are identical to their object of devotion, and people's object of devotion

37. Sigmund Freud. Die Zukunft einer Illusion. *ibid.*, p. 165

38. *Ibid.*, p. 166

39. Erich Fromm. Haben oder Sein. Stuttgart 1976, p. 133

40. *Ibid.*, p. 134

motivates people's actions.⁴¹ Religion becomes an ideology when one unconsciously has oneself as one's object of devotion and at the same time professes a religion like Christianity, with an object outside the individual. Every society needs an orientation of a sort, an object of devotion towards which people can collectively direct their energies in order to transcend isolated human existence, its doubts and insecurity, and over and above, render meaning to people's lives. The social-economic structure, the character structure and the religious structure are inseparable from one another. Religious system becomes an ideology when the society's character and practice contradicts it, in which case the real religious structure hides behind the official religion.⁴²

2.1,3 Conclusion

Religion is to a large extent modified by the culture in which it expresses itself, nevertheless, the object of most religions as well as their purpose remain the same, in such a way that one could talk of universals of religions. Asking of the function of religion is equal to asking of the purpose of religion, which is in many cases nothing but salvation. Understanding a particular religion is making effort in finding out the means with which the religion endeavours to bring salvation to mankind, ref., to the adherents. Towards this end, religions in one way or the other posit and teach about a supreme being, in which their members should believe. Such a centralized, immortal and unchanging idea brought a centralized and unchangeable laws, traditions and tabus, applicable at all times and to all members of the society. Since the laws do not take cognition of individual feelings, opinions and other particularities, many religions that influence their members through laws are therefore ill-equipped to help one obtain one's salvation. The people who make an effort to fit in themselves into the given way of life in spite of

41. Ibid., p. 135

42. Ibid., p. 138

themselves end up in being subjects of religion's critics, like Marx, Feuerbach, Freud etc., who approach religion with negative, biased minds. The criticism of religion is the criticism of the cultural, social, and economic aspect of a religion, to which religion should be indebted, in as far as it helps a religion and its members to reassess themselves.

We do not intend to say that the cultural and non-theological aspects of religion should be abandoned; we are rather suggesting that cultural aspects of a religion should also aim at the salvation of man, and not necessarily the society which is nobody. Erich Fromm correctly suggested how one could come about it. As we have already seen, religion becomes an ideology when its structure no longer corresponds with the social economic and character structure of the society. Fromm believes that society and the individuals in particular should have a religious object of orientation, which should influence the social-economic and individual character structure of the members of the society. We shall now go to see what efforts the Nigerian traditional religion makes in promoting the salvation of Nigerians.

2.2,1 IGBO TRADITIONAL RELIGION as an example of a Nigerian traditional religion.

If we assume that religion is contemporary to man's awareness of his biological and physical needs that led to his search for food and shelter, ⁴³ religion can therefore be said to be man's reaction to his awareness of the cosmos and an unexplicable but intelligible nature - as long as one admits the intelligibility of all nature and the Universe, one must therefore consequently ask oneself whether the Universe could be intelligible without having an intelligible source, or origin, and thus become a question about God. ⁴⁴ When one believes to have uncovered nature to find this origin of the orderliness of nature, one holds an object to be the power behind nature or, in the case of the Igbos, a dwelling-place

43. Jastrow M. in Macdougall William, An Intr. to social Anthropology, Methuen & Co. London, 14th. ed., p. 260

44. Bernhard Lonergan, a.s.O., p. 101

of the power behind nature. The social and serious attitude of the individuals towards this power which they believe possesses ultimate control over their interests and destinies gives rise to religion, thus a product of reflection and an amalgamation of personally and socially derived responses to this ultimate power or powers. Religion therefore becomes a cultural phenomenon, a way of life, and an explanation of whatever life is, i.e. it gives meaning to man and the whole nature. It is precisely this function of religion that shapes people's identity by providing them with a common meaning, laws and regulations and therefore forms an integral part of the formation of people's identity. There is nothing that challenges Igbo identity more than the losing of face of their traditional religion against Christianity. We shall therefore come to see the Igbo traditional religious life and worship, their belief, and their relationship to the powers they posit as mediators and adjuncts of the great God, the ancestors and their places in the life of the Igbos who venerate them.

The supernatural

Mankind conceived the idea of the supernatural from perception, awe, admiration and orderliness in nature, and therefore posits a supernatural that must be responsible for all that is. The power of the supernatural lies in the attitude of the people towards it, where people hold it with awe, admiration and reverence, it becomes powerful and decisive, because admiration is made up of wonder and a bit of negative self-feeling. Awe is a fusion of admiration and fear, and reverence is awe blended with tender emotion.⁴⁵ The supernatural is made responsible for all that happens, and this in turn reflects man's disposition, death and misery as a reflection of nature's annoyance and disapproval

45. W. McDougall, An Introduction to Social Anthropology, Methuen and Co. Ltd. London, 14th. ed., p. 260

of human action - a punishment; life and prosperity as a vivid demonstration of nature's happiness and approval human action - a reward. ⁴⁶ This was in short, the general attitude of the adherents to the Nigerian traditional religions, in particular the Igbo traditional religion, where the supernatural is believed to intervene in all human affairs, ⁴⁷ as we may now come to see.

The Igbo supernatural being

The Igbos have grades of supernatural beings the greatest of which is the "chi-Ukwu", the Great-God, "Chi" meaning God and "Ukwu" meaning great. This Great-God is also called "Chi-neke" meaning the god who creates or the creator. Chi-Ukwu, from all indication seemed to have abandoned all affairs of the world to the lesser spirits "Umu-agbara", "umu" meaning children, and "agbara" the collective name for spirits and their descendants. Due to their direct contact with the people, they seem to have taken the place of the Great-God. Although the people often pray to the Great-God, ⁴⁸ most sacrifices are made to the "Agbaras". The Great-God is often addressed as the "Obasi bi na Igwe"; the origin of the word "Obasi" is not clear, but it is generally supposed to mean a god: the phrase "bi na igwe" who lives in heaven or sky. As some non-Igbos, e.g. Parrinder, a missionary, have rightly remarked: "Simple prayers may be addressed directly to God, and the elder of a house in the morning may take a kola nut in his right hand and lay it on the ground saying - Our Father in heaven eat kola (a kind of fruit)". ⁴⁹

The very fact that prayers and libations could be made to the Great-God anywhere strongly suggest that there is no shrine or altar for Him. Aro-Chukwu people, a clan in Igbo land, in their attempt to dominate the Igbo land invented a shrine for the Chi-ukwu, where they made the people believe that only there could anyone make an acceptable sacrifice to the Chi-ukwu.

46. Julian Huxley, Religion without revelation, London C.A.Watts & Co. Ltd. London 1967, ed., p. 45

47. T.G.Basden. Among the Ibos of Nigerian. Frank Cass and Co. Ltd. 1960, p. 215

48. P. Talbot. The people of Southern Nigeria, Vol. II, s.a.O., p.40

49. Geoffrey Parrinder, West African religion, London 1974, Sheldon Press, p.381

It was acclaimed to be the most sacred place on earth as well as the last court of appeal. With such a device and trick, Aro-chukwu became the religious centre of the Igbos for a long time as well as the dominating people in trade in human beings and in politics.⁵⁰ The amazing success of the Aro device shows further that the Igbos had no shrine dedicated to the Great-God. About the people's strong belief in the Great-God, creator of all things; a missionary and anthropologist had the following to say: " The people knew nothing of the blessed Trinity, but believed firmly in the existence of one supreme spirit who created all things and controlled them. He was known in some places as Chukwu or Chi-ukwu (the great spirit). He had no equal".⁵¹

The divinities

The divinities are believed to be next to the Great-God in power and function. From him they derive their power and functions. Some people describe them as ministers in the theocratic government of the Universe, each with a definite function in the deity's monarchical government.⁵²

Most prominent among the divinities is the "Ala" or " Ani", the earth goddess and the custodian of Igbo morality. She punishes those who commit moral offences as well as unrepentant offenders. She is generally taken as a good mother.⁵³

Another great divinity is the "Anyanwu", the sun god, who nourishes all living organisms. From him comes the god "Amadi-Oha", the god of thunder who people say lives in the sun. Every river has a god, so also has every physical and natural feature,⁵⁴ as well as towns and villages.⁵⁵

50. Elizabeth Isichei, A history of the Igbo people, a.a.O., p.59

51. J.Jordan, Bishop Shanahan of Southern Nigeria, a.a.O., p. 57

52. Idowu E. Bolaji, African Traditional Religion (A definition), SCM Press Ltd. London 1973, p. 169 ff

53. Uchendu V.,The Igbo of Southern Nigeria, New York 1965, p.96

54. Arinze A.F.,Sacrifice in Igbo religion, Ibadan Univ. Press 1970, 1st. ed., p. 14 ff

55. Parrinder E.G., African traditional religion, 3rd.ed., Sheldan Press, London 1974, p. 53

We have always assumed that the people believe that these powers are gods, just because of the respect and reverence accorded to them. In the long run we may find out that these are not more than spirits, since they did not create the object they inhabit they may therefore be referred to as the spirit of the particular object they inhabit. Spirits who- we are now going to see - are not attached to any object.

The common spirits

Spirits "muo" or "Umu-Mow", are generally believed to be the spirit of the living dead as well as spirits created as such. These have no permanent habitation, but are believed to carry on human activities in their spirit world.⁵⁶ People attribute great feats to their assistance; herbalists and diviners believe that they are guided and assisted in their profession by these spirits in order to win respect and reverence from the people. Though the spirits are feared they could equally be put under control through magic.⁵⁷

The spirits of the ancestors

The spirit of an ancestor is believed to remain with the living relatives to assist and guide them in all affairs and therefore has an important place in the social and political life of the Igbos. The Igbos pray to them and offer sacrifices to them as they do to the gods.⁵⁸

The spirits of the ancestors, in other words, the living dead, are the guidance of family affairs, traditions, morals and culture. Since they are partly human and partly spirits, they stand a good chance of pleading for their people before the Great-God.⁵⁹

56. Mbiti John: African religions & philosophy, Praeger Publishers, New York 1970, p. 79 f

57. Idowu E. Bolaji, a.a.O.. p. 177 f

58. Ibid., p. 183

59. John Mbiti, a.a.O., p. 83 ff

A European anthropologist once said:

The Ibos believe that their lives are profoundly influenced by their ancestors, and this belief has far-reaching sociological consequences. Any departure from custom, for example, is likely to incur the displeasure and vengeance of the ancestors. The ancestors under one presidency of the earth spirit. Ala, are the guardians of morality and the owners of the soil. ⁶⁰

It is believed that the ancestors come back to their families, through the taking of flesh in the womb of a related (woman) by their spirit (reincarnation). In other words, every child is a reincarnated spirit of one of the ancestors, thus the indestructibility of the family and clan community life and togetherness. Such a belief gives not only purpose and meaning to the people's life but also a sense of unity and continuity.

Another type of spirit that has much to do with the people's daily life is the "Agwu", a proselytizing spirit, which influences people's behaviour and at times directs their occupations. This is the spirit who chooses priests, "Dibias", as well as Diviners and herbalists and some other occupations. As we shall soon come to see the Diviners play a large role in the life of the Igbos, they are consulted in order to know the minds of the gods as well as before taking a decision on an important issue and their opinions as fortune-tellers are widely respected. ⁶¹ It is precisely this mysterious mediating role of the diviners we are next going to consider.

Divination in Igboland

A French writer, Jacques Ellul, talks of two paths of human technical development, namely: The technique of man the maker who invents and uses tools, builds houses, machines etc., and the technique of the spiritual order, especially magic. The writer understands magic as a conscious attempt to control the environ-

60. K.C. Meek, Law and authority in a Nigerian tribe, Oxford Univ. Press, London 1937, p. 61

61. K.C. Meek, a.a.O., p. 82

ment in which man lives, either in the form of prayer, sacrificing some animal, or reciting an incantation in prescribed form. ⁶² Using this spiritual technique, the Igbo man who believes that the spirits control his affairs, seeks a mediator between himself and the many gods or powers, and falls into the hands of Diviners, who are believed to know the minds of the gods and the ways of appealing to them or avoiding their anger. Diviners are the most popular figures in the religious life of the Igbos and of many traditional-minded Nigerians, who still adhere to the traditional religion. These fortune-tellers serve as deterrents to all offences and to secret offenders, who, knowing full well that they would be detected by consulting a diviner, who uncovers secret acts, people therefore keep away from all offences.

People also seek their opinion on all important stages of life, e.g., in choosing a wife or husband, at birth to know which ancestor is reincarnated in the child, in death to find out who is responsible for the death etc. ⁶³

In general they are highly respected not only because of the important role they play in the lives of the people but also for the rigorous, painful training they undergo and the relationship people believe they enjoy with the powers. Moreover they not only advise people in need and in difficulty but also serve as prophets in their various communities. ⁶⁴ They are equally feared and respected because people believe that they are under the possession of the spirits whenever they are engaged in divination. ⁶⁵ Igbos belief in the powers of the Diviners could be summarised by the following expression: "Ane esi na anya Dibia ahu mmuo", that means, one sees the spirit through the eyes of a diviner, one hears the words of the spirit through the mouth of a diviner.

62. Ellul J. Jacques, Technological Society Cape 1963 apud Wilkes Keith: Religion and Technology, Ret.Educ.Press Oxford, 1st.ed. 1972, p. 6

63. E.G.Parrinder, African Traditional Religion, a.a.O.,p.119 ff

64. African Encyclopedia, Oxford Univ. Press(1974),London Section Divination

65. E.Idowu, Bolaji, a.a.O., p.117

Their function in the community is unlimited, they say when to engage in a war, they maintain justice in the land, ⁶⁶ direct people on sacrificial rites and requirements, and are in many cases the only eligible men to offer sacrifice, depending on the type of sacrifice. We are now going to consider next the Igbo traditional religion's sacrificial rites and requirements.

Sacrifices

Sacrifices are means of atonement and of restoring order in a community and in one's life. Since the gods are believed to be the custodians of order and custom in the community, offences against the order of the community is therefore regarded as offence and disrespect against the particular god, who is responsible for that particular order or law. The offender has to offer a sacrifice as prescribed by a diviner in order to appease the god who was abused. Sacrifices are offered to give thanks for a good or lucky incident, for the gods are responsible for all that happens, be it good or bad. Most of the sacrifices offered to the Great-God mainly by the eldest in the family have neither the character of an atonement nor imply a restoration of an order but rather have a communal, petitional and devotional character.

Sacrificial requirements

Sacrifices are usually carried out according to the instructions of a diviner or a priest. Sacrificial items are usually the best of the sort, clean and spotless as the sacrifice itself which is expected to be offered without blemish. ⁶⁷ Kola nut "oji" is the most popular thing used for sacrifice because of it's symbolic and social meaning. People pray with the kola nut using it to ask favour from the gods and at the same time expressing their solidarity with one another. ⁶⁸ Domestic animals like fowl, hens,

66. Margaret Green, a.a.O., p. 135 ff

67. H.G.Leonard, The lower Niger and its Tribes, a.a.O., p. 453

68. Ekem Nwankwo, Danda, London 1973, p. 13

(eggs), goats, sheep, dogs, cows etc. are used in offering sacrifices. Depending on the type of sacrifice and the reason for the sacrifice. The word sacrifice is justified when one considers what is to be offered and the financial position of the petitioner, for example, a hen or fowl in those days was of great value and cows could hardly be found, so someone asked to sacrifice a hen or a fowl for abusing an elderly man would surely never venture to abuse anyone again. Domestic animals are means of income, they are rarely eaten by the people except on feast days or for a particular purpose. People normally sell them in order to buy whatever they need but cannot produce, and in recent times to pay their children's school fees. ⁶⁹ Another important sacrificial item is food crops such as yam, palm-wine and oil, coco-yam etc. Yam is a staple food item, as well as a symbol of prestige and hard work. For these reasons people do not easily give away their yams either for consumption or for sale except in case of necessity, e.g., to buy an important good which one cannot produce by himself. ⁷⁰ Many keep and treasure their yams with the hope of one day becoming "Eze jii", a king of yam or yam chief; a very important social status, the dream of many Igbo men.

Nkem Nwankwo, an Igbo novelist, illustrates in the book "Danda" the value Igbos attach to yam - a measure of one's social worth and industry. ⁷¹

Palm-wine is the most popular drink among the Igbos which they believe gladdens one's heart, and puts away anger and bitterness. It is normally offered to one to show and demonstrate one's appreciation, thanks, hospitality and friendship. Locally, the Igbos offer someone wine, from whom one either intends to ask a favour or to show one's appreciation. Hence palm-wine became an important sacrificial item in order to ask favour from the gods, to show one's appreciation and thanks; in short, wine is offered to the gods

69. Margret Green, a.a.O., p. 34 ff

NB: this observation is possibly seen only in particular areas which are poorer as the others, where livestock & crops are more abundant

70. Margret Green, a.a.O., p. 42

71. Mkem Nwankwo, a.a.O., p. 161

for the same reason people offer it to one another.

So the offering of yam to a god is in itself a very big sacrifice and demand from the people. Palm-wine offering being a symbolic gesture has a lot of meaning and moreover it is supposed to create a friendly relationship between one and the gods. Other sacrificial items include money (cowries), pieces of cloth, bird-feathers, lizards etc. Sacrificial requirement is comprised of precious goods, symbolic items, items very difficult to procure like the skin or feather of a scarce or dangerous animal or bird. At times people preparing for sacrifice are advised to abstain from so many things including food items, to do abnormal things which under normal circumstance they would not like to do, behaviour and attitudes that require courage and conviction.

Sacrificial rites

Sacrifice of thanksgiving can be offered by any adult but in many cases by the oldest in the family. A sacrifice of petition is normally performed by the family father or a priest who encouraged the sacrifice. Sacrifices of atonement, placation and repentance are usually performed by a priest, who is trained and commissioned. They are specially chosen by the "Agwu" as we have already seen, they conduct public sacrifices and prayers and look after shrines and altars, just as it is in many other African countries.⁷² The office of the priest could be held by a man or woman, young or old since they are not being chosen by the people but by the god "Agwu", who calls who ever he likes.

Communion with one another and with the gods is in many cases the main idea behind many sacrifices performed on a communal level, where people believe the ancestors and their village divinities eat together with them.

Igbos sacrifices like that of many other African peoples consists of pouring the blood of a slaughtered animal on the shrine or altar, pouring wine on the altar or throwing whatever one has for sacrifice on the altar. The victim is believed to be consumed

72. John Mbiti, African Religions & Philosophy, Preager Publishers, New York 1970, p. 68

by the spirits of ancestors to whom the sacrifice was made even when it is obvious that dogs or birds consumed the sacrificed object. Later, the people cook the sacrificed victim and share it among themselves (if the victim is edible).⁷³

Prior to this, the priest opens the ceremony by reminding the people why they assembled together and puts their petition or prayers to the gods and ancestors. The people standing behind the priest voice their support and participation in the prayers and petitions of the priest by chorusing "Ihaa", a word similar to Amen.

A shrine consists of an elevated platform or mound, on which a man places statues and other carved images standing for the gods or divinity to whom the shrine is dedicated. An altar is made up of pegged sticks or stems of plants that can germinate, mud walls, tree trunks, forest, river banks, streets, etc. In some cases a god can ask the people to build him a special shrine or house, popularly called in some areas "Mbare" house, "Mbari" meaning a sacrifice, so a house of sacrifice would be the literary translation. One can hear people talk of Mbari house of Amadioha (the god of thunder) of Mbari house of the Duru Ojiaku (the god of wealth). To show the sacredness of these house, the builders are secluded from the people and spared from normal business, and are looked upon as people dedicated to the gods during the period of work at the house.⁷⁴ These houses are often built in a village central place, where sacrifices could be carried on according to the prescription and time given and advised by the diviner.

In general, when and how a sacrifice is to be performed varies and depends on the instruction of a diviner who orders the sacrifice.

People often offer private sacrifices to the "Agwu" in the case of a priest, or a diviner or herbalist or some-one with an important occupation or skill taught one by the "Agwu".

73. E.G. Parrinder, a.s.O., p. 87 f

74. John Okparocha, Mbari. Art as Sacrifice, Babbist Press, Ibadan 1976, pp. 6 and 14

People also offer sacrifices to their "Chi", a personal guide and protector, either to thank him for his guidance or to ask him for a favour. In some parts of Igbo land like in Oguta, titled men have personal "Ikenga", the spirit of good fortune, which expects from the holder an upright life, in order to be effective. Sacrifices are also offered in his honour.

This is, in a nutshell, a brief look at the Igbo traditional religion, its aim, sacrificial requirements and rites. A religion that aims at a moral social order and justice in a world it believes is controlled by the supernatural, a world in which man has to dance to the tunes of the gods he creates. The powers and divinities which the people posit later become the custodians of moral laws and traditions. An abandonment of these powers would therefore imply a complete distortion and abandonment of the Igbo moral laws and culture which these powers are believed to protect and from whom the laws have their powers. Thus a danger is posed to Christianity. We shall soon come to see how Christianity handled this problem.

2.2,2 NIGERIAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION IN GENERAL:

Islam in the North has made it practically impossible or rather difficult to talk of the traditional religion of the peoples of the northern Nigeria where Islam came as far back as in the 13th and 14th century. But there is every indication that the traditional religions found in the South would be quite similar to the local religions that existed in the North. We shall therefore look at some of the traditional religions of some of the people's of southern Nigeria.

A European anthropologist, who worked and lived for a long time in the Southern Nigeria, once said of the people:

"The Southern Nigerian native is a deeply religious being; kernel of his beliefs is reached by instinct or intuition perhaps by means of his intercourse with the dead and the higher plane generally, he sees and knows some things, of which knowledge is only attained by the European after much thought and striving".

He had the following words to say about the people's attitude towards the cults of their neighbouring people's:

"All the local religions and cults show a friendliness to one another which is as remarkable as the liberality and entire freedom of thought permitted to individuals. Considerations towards the convictions of others and respect for their sacred symbols are expected from strangers and are naturally accorded by these. This tolerance in religious matters is one of the negro's most attractive qualities".⁷⁵

Well, it may not be quite true that the people obtain knowledge of the supernatural from their intercourse with the dead, of course the dead are generally believed to possess more information and better knowledge of the world than the living. How exactly the people came to the knowledge of the supernatural is not yet clear, but one could presume that it is inborn or intuitive. We have heard that the Southerners are deeply religious; we shall now come to see how and why.

The people generally believe that the supernatural have their hands in everything that happens be it good or bad, and reflect the disposition of the supernaturals. In other words nothing happens by chance; every act manifests the handwork of the Great-God, and all cosmic forces are intelligible, and accomplish the will of the Great-God or what we shall later come to be calling God.⁷⁶ Names given to children are mostly expressions of love of God, the Great-god, or one's relationship with any of the divinities to whom one may either owe thanks for the birth of the child or simply named after the divinity with the diminutive "nwa", child of .. at the beginning. Children are often so named because of the people's belief that children are divine gifts of love.⁷⁷

75. Talbot Amaury. The Peoples of the Southern Nigeria.vol.2, London 1969, pp. 27 f

76. a.a.O., p. 27

77. Awolalu Omosade J.and Dopamu Adelumo P. West African Traditional Religion. Onibonaje press Ibadan 1979, p. 37

Parents name their children also according to the family status of the dead ancestor who reincarnated in the new born baby, e.g. a Grandfather who later is reincarnated in a baby. The baby boy would most probably be called Grandfather by some of the family members.

We have earlier heard, that the people of Southern Nigeria respect one another's cult and religion. The reason behind this attitude is the people's belief that man cannot be greater than a god no matter whose god it is, and should be accorded all respect. This respect and reverence to other cults and religious communities (the word religion is for this context not appropriate, since all these practices are attributes of the same religion with almost the same beliefs as we may later come to see. But we shall for want of an appropriate definition and classification be calling these different practices religions) show that the people of Southern Nigeria have unique religions and cults, which if thoroughly investigated run to a central point, namely the supreme God,⁷⁸ the central point of all these so-called religions. The Yorubas are a typical example of the peoples of Southern Nigeria with a religion similar to what the Igbos have with a more elaborate cult. We shall now come to see what the various people's of Southern Nigeria say of the supreme Being, whom we may call God.

HIS NAMES:

Yorubas call him "Olodumare" (one who has the superlative greatness); "Olorun" (the Lord whose abode is in heaven); "Eledaa" (the creator); "Alaayo" (the living one); "Elemii" (the owner of life); "Olojo Oni" (controller or owner of this day), these are the various names the Yorubas have for him, at the same time descriptions of him.⁷⁹

78. A. Talbot, a.a.O. p. 15

79. Awolalu Omosade J. Yoruba Beliefs and sacrificial Rites.
Longman London 1979, pp. 11 f

The Edos call him "Osanobua" or "Osanobwa" (the source of all things, who carries and sustains the world). The Ijo call him "Temearau" (creatress of all things), speaking of God in feminine terms. The Tiv call him "Oando" (the great unknown above). The Efik call him "Abasi Ibom" (the greatest god). When one analyses these names given to him by the people of Southern Nigeria, one would find out that all agree that he is the creator of all things, the greatest of all gods and powers, the power who sustains the universe and many say he lives above or in the heavens or sky.⁸⁰

No doubt each of these names would be acceptable to each of the religious groups, communities, and ethnic as a worthy name for the supreme Being.

SACRIFICES TO HIM:

There is no detailed or pronounced form of sacrifice to him among the various people's of Southern Nigeria. The Yorubas like the Igbos have prayers and praises to him; they praise God before going to bed and when they wake up in the morning. Yoruba sacrifices are all aimed to God through the divinities in that they conclude all worship of the divinities with the word "A se ", meaning " may it be sanctioned by God". The Ijos have a festival in honour of Temiarau, the supreme Deity, a festival they call " Suo Alah ", meaning the feast of the creatress, and they pray anywhere to Temearau for protection and material wellbeing. There are generally no shrines or altars dedicated to him among the people, nor are there statues or images of him accepted widely among the people. Sacrifices are generally made to the small gods and divinities, just because the people believe that these are not necessarily executives of the supreme God but supernatural powers who stand between them and the supreme God, the creator. These in their nature have powers over human beings and their affairs. Since these are generally believed to be just and strict,

80. Awolalu Omosade & Dopamu Adelumo, a.a.O. pp. 40 ff

their opinions and punishments are always regarded to be just and indiscriminate and therefore reflect the mind of the supreme God. These powers punish men quite unlike the supreme God, therefore sacrifices are made directly to them and indirectly in some cases to the Creator. These sacrifices to these powers are made in order to win the favour and goodwill of the gods and divinities, they are means of bribing the gods and powers who threaten and limit individual freedom and self-realization. Just like every bribery, the sacrifices lack love and sincerity, therefore sincere repentance would also be lacking in that the whole sacrifice is made out of fear of death and punishment. On the other hand, the supreme God who rarely punishes, and has no particular place of worship; neither does he require or demand from the people any particular sacrificial rites or items, but appears very liberal and loving. Thus the many praises and intimate prayers to him, since he has no particular place of worship, and while prayers and offerings could be made to him everywhere gives one the impression that the people believe that he is always close at hand. ⁸¹

SOUTHERN NIGERIANS AND THEIR DIVINITIES:

THE YORUBAS:

The Yorubas like the Igbos have many divinities or gods, who are believed to be in control of human affairs and natural objects which serve human interests. Such gods are for example: "Obatala" or "Orisa n la", who is said to have played a part in the creation of man, particularly in the moulding of human form into which "Olodumare", the supreme God, put in life. This divinity is known for giving issue to barren women and also for moulding the child in the womb; he is also known for his purity. ⁸²

81. a.a.O., pp. 122 ff

82. Awolalu Omosade. Yoruba Beliefs. a.a.O., p. 21

Women hold traditionally religious functions, there are women diviners, priests and doctors. The spirit Agwu is free to choose whom ever he likes, and this will be respected by the people.

cf. Ross L. Sylvia. African Woman. A study of the Ibo of Nigeria. Routledge and Kegan Paul 1968, p.

"Orunmila", is the oracle divinity of the Yorubas, and occupies second place after the supreme God, and acts as his deputy in matters of wisdom, prognostication and foreknowledge; he also pleads with "Olodumare" on behalf of men. It may be of interest to note that the Yorubas believe in predestination, because the supreme God, "Olodumare", is believed to have destined every one during creation, and to what they were destined, could no one other than Orunmila remember. He is the only one who was present when every one received his fate from Olodumare. Therefore, he is the only one who could advise people on how to rectify their fates, and also has the power to mediate in matters between other divinities and men. Orunmila interprets the mind of Olodumare through divination, and prescribes what sacrifice should be made, since he alone knows the mind of Olodumare. Quite unlike many other divinities seen in parts of Southern Nigeria, Orunmila is widely believed to have been born by human beings from Ife, from where he wandered throughout the world teaching people wisdom.⁸³ This shows exactly that the Yorubas believe in one supreme God if the second and his deputy is not a primordial divinity, with whom he created man. In spite of the contradictions, and the attempt to make Ife not only a religious centre but also the centre of the world, one cannot but admire the clear idea of a monotheistic beliefs of the people.

Oduduwa, the ancestor of the Yorubas, is seen by many as a deified ancestor, who is believed to have helped in the creation of the worlds inhabitants. A very important deity to the Yorubas.

"Esu", is another famous divinity among the Yorubas, and he is noted for his mischievous and benevolent deeds. He punishes those who do not offer sacrifices according to prescription and rewards people for sacrifices well offered. "Esu" taught "Orisa nla" the act of divination, and he is believed to be Olodumare's

83. a.a.O., p. 23

Parrinder a.a.O. pp. 87 f

deputy in matters of ritual and human conduct. People can invoke him either to harm enemies or to bless friends; he can accuse or defend divinities or men before Olodumare for whom he goes on errands. ⁸⁴

"Ogun" is the god of iron and of war and the patron of blacksmiths, hunters, warriors and all who deal with iron. He is said to have made way into the world for other divinities to come in by learning the bush with his magical matchet, and is therefore known as the chief of the divinities. ⁸⁵ People believe that he could as well clear the way for them to seccess with the same magical matchet. Ogun stands also for absolute justice, people therefore swear with iron invoking Ogun to bear witness to one's sincerity or a covenant, and he is believed to punish people who swear falsely or break a covenant. ⁸⁶

Deified ancestors are also venerated such as "Sango", "Orisa-Oko", patron of farmers, and "Ayelala". The earth is also venerated, because it is believed to be inhabited by a spirit. ⁸⁷

THE IBIBIOS:

The Ibibios, have the "Obumo", the thunderer and owner of rain, to whom sacrifices are offered during seed and harvest time. They have also the "Isong", the earth goddess, responsible for the fertility of plants; sacrifices are also offered to her during harvest. ⁸⁸

84. Okparaocha John. Mbari. Art as Sacrifice. Sabtist press Ibaden. 1976, pp. 6 and 14

Awolalu & Dopamu. a.a.O.,p. 82

85. Nzimiro Ikenna. Studies in Ibo Political System. Frank Cass London 1972, p. 35

a.a.O., p. 81

86. Awolalu Omosade a.a.O., pp. 32 f

87. a.a.O., pp. 33 f

88. Awolalo & Dopamu. a.a.O., p. 100

THE EDOS:

Edos are believed to have many divinities according to human needs, activities and experiences.⁸⁹ Their principle divinities are the "Olokun", the god of the sea or waters and the owner of all property and the arch-divinity in Edoland. They have "Ogiuwa", the god of thunder and "Oto", the earth goddess.

THE IJOS:

The Ijos have the "Egbesu", the arch-divinity, the "Bin abu", the gods of Ocean and waters. Most prominent among the gods are the "Adamu" or the "Amakiri", the earth god. In addition each village has a god called "Amoru" collectively.⁹⁰

TYPES OF SACRIFICES:

The Yorubas have the "Ebo ope ati idapo", a thanksgiving and communion sacrifice, meant to maintain good relationships with the gods. They have the "Ebo Eje", a votive sacrifice, in which people make promises to gods in return for an expected favour from the particular god. They have the "Ebo Etutu", a propitiatory sacrifice, the "Ebo Ojukoribi", a preventive sacrifice, to keep evil and misfortune away. They have "Ebo Ayepinun", a substitutional sacrifice, whereby an animal is offered to propitiate a thirsty divinity; and the "Ebo Ipile", a foundation sacrifice, to propitiate a god habiting where one would like to build a house.⁹¹

Although the Yorubas may have more elaborate types of sacrifices and divinities more than the other people's of Southern Nigeria, the motives of the sacrifices remain the same, so⁹² also the idea behind the creation of the divinities.

89. John Mbiti. Concept of God in Africa. London,
S.P.C.K. 1977, p. 118

90. Awolalu and Dopamu. a.a.O., pp. 95-99

91. Awolalu Omosade a.a.O., pp. 141 ff

92. Awolalu and Dopamu. a.a.O., pp. 132 ff

Among the people's, the fear of the unknown, and the unexplainable nature of human surroundings and man's ignorance of himself make him create and posit the unknown god, responsible for the unknown nature and all physical and natural phenomena, including the unexplainable incidents in his life. In many cases the known and the explainable incidents, mainly the happy ones, are attributed to the Supreme God, e.g. childbirth, good health, having enough to eat and good shelter etc. Many of the people's praises are made to the Supreme God.

2.2,3 CONCLUSION:

Having had a short look at the Nigerian traditional religions, particularly the Igbo and the Yoruba traditional religions; one fact becomes obvious namely, the uniqueness of the religions. Their uniqueness is shown through their common belief in a supreme Being, responsible for everything that is; their belief in divinities, powers, and spirits who control the nature and influence human affairs. Most outstanding is their belief in the continual relationship between the living and the dead relatives and reincarnation.

As we have said earlier the motive of the sacrifices and the creation of the divinities by the people are quite similar. These go to point out that one could talk of a Nigerian traditional religion, taking their common beliefs and motives into consideration. The existing varieties could be explained from the geographical and ethnic differences, due to a lack of genuine communication. The divinities in each community has special priests, special tastes and attributes, like names and functions, and sometimes special sacrificial rites; but hardly is it heard that the priests of the various divinities or clients of the divinities look down on the others or the divinity itself. All the various divinities and their various types of service are taken as a part of the whole, namely, the effort of the people and their communal aspiration of being

in good terms with the spirits and divinities, all to the welfare of the entire community, a unity in plurality, thus ecumenism in the traditional religion. Ecumenism due to the unknowable nature of the gods and their uncountable wants and expectations, therefore pluralism and tolerance should be allowed in order to meet up to the expectations of the supernaturals, in order to satisfy a common end, namely, the welfare of the individual and the community.

Traditional religion was the only basis of the precolonial government, economy and social order of the people's of Southern Nigeria. It unified the people by providing common moral and legal codes of conduct, it formed people's conscience, policed the people and provided just and adequate punishment for offenders, and rewards for good conduct. By so doing it set a high standard for any other type of religion that might challenge it or confront it.

Unfortunately, this religion lacked something which man needs for his own mental and physical development, namely, human freedom, dignity and self-fulfillment or realization, since everything has to be done according to the will of the gods, and the opinions of the gods have to be sought before any adventure or undertaking. The gods often ask for human sacrifices or inhuman punishment of people, in short, the people were practically slaves of the gods they made, thus several types of offerings and magical acts to bribe the insatiable gods. So one could say that the people now deserve a liberator, a Messias. We shall soon come to see how Christianity faced this task.

2.2,4 THE FEATURES OF NIGERIAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION:

In view of the fact that we have been talking of Igbo, Yoruba, Efik, Ijaw etc. religions, one may have to ask if it would not be more appropriate to speak of Nigerian traditional religions instead of religion. The varieties of the religion are due to the varieties of experiences and history of the various groups,

these experiences and their responses create traditions passed from one generation to the other. This same experience creates gods and deities, makes laws and tabus; over and above these, ancestor veneration in a way creates different entities both in political and in religious spheres. We speak of religion in spite of varieties, because these experiences are made and expressed under some already given knowledge and beliefs, which are the same not only in Nigeria but among many people's of Africa. In other words, the independence of the villages, ethnic groups and kingdoms from one another is mainly responsible for the different outlooks of Nigerian traditional religion, but they still remain one religion, just as the various Christian denominations or churches remain the same Christianity in spite of their independence from one another in experiences, traditions and beliefs; for the same reason can one rightly speak of African traditional religion instead of religions.

Examples of this fundamental knowledge and belief in which experiences are made and expressed in various times and places are : (a) Belief in one supreme being, from whom all that is immanates and is sustained. Pope Paul VI, commenting on this belief, said " the idea of God, as first or ultimate cause of all things perceived rather than analysed, believed rather than reflected on, is expressed in very different ways from culture to culture". ⁹³ (b) The connection of the seen to the unseen, union of the dead with the living, the spirit within the ordinary man, and the dependence of the earthly, man, or the seen, on the spiritual, the unseen and the spirits. ⁹⁴ Laws and customs are founded and promulgated under this belief, that the earthly is ordained and supervised by the spiritual. (c) Belief in the community and union of interest with the ancestors, who may be called the living dead. The veneration of the ancestors, through the observance of the precepts and

93. Africae Terrarum. Art. 8 in AAS 59, 1967, p. 1079

94. E.Uzukwu. Igbo Spirituality Through Igbo Prayers.

Bulletin of African Theology, Zaire 1983, p. 211

traditions passed down by them, guarantees stability, continuity, unity and order and at the same time creates dissimilarities between groups, ethnic groups and villages. (d) The belief in reincarnation, that man after death is admitted in the company of the ancestors and at the same time is reborn into the family in which he lived.

(e) A religion which centres around man, his total welfare on earth, the welfare of his descendants and his community with the ancestors after death as well as his rebirth into his family. Man offers sacrifices and worships for his own material well-being. Be it Nigerian traditional religion or African traditional religion, the religion does not seek to make its members holy nor does it encourage its members to seek a transcendental union with the Supreme Being or with any deity or godhood. The religion does not seek the welfare of God, the Supreme Being, nor that of any deity or spirit, nor does it seek to love them but rather to obey the laws they are supposed to have laid down to serve human interests. The secular is so interwoven with the sacred that one does not exclude the other nor could one be conceived without the other and thereby given the religion an anthropocentric or man-centred outlook. According to a writer on African religion:

"To live here and now is the most important concern of African religious activities and beliefs. There is little, if any, concern with the distinctly spiritual welfare of man apart from his physical life. Even life hereafter is conceived in materialistic and physical terms. There is neither paradise to be hoped for nor hell to be feared in the hereafter. The soul of man does not long for spiritual redemption, or for closer contact with God in the next world There is no messianic hope or apocalyptic vision of God stepping in at some future moment to bring about a radical reversal of man's normal life. God is not pictured in an ethical-spiritual relationship with man".⁹⁵

95. Harvey Cox. African Religions and Philosophy, London 1969, pp. 4-5 in Aylward Shorter

The religion does not intend to make man a god or a spirit but to help him be a man and have the fullness of life as a man.

Nigerian traditional religion, like other African traditional religions in quest of human welfare, seeks to communicate with and where possible influence and control the unseen world, just as the secular aspect of culture seeks to control the seen of known world. In order to communicate with and control the unknown world including the spirits, (the inhabitants), laws, religious rites, traditions and practices like magic, oracles and sacrifices were introduced, which later formed a part of culture. The unknown, like spirits and deities, are often located in the unknown or mysterious natural features, like mountains, forests and rivers, features whose origin is unknown, and in other natural features like the sun, the moon and the underworld. Nigerians are in general surrounded by so many unknown, natural features for which no one could account for their existence in that the principle of causality fails to hold in such cases. The spirits are therefore not only responsible for the peculiarity of natural features, like extraordinary huge trees etc., but also are believed to inhabit them. For that reason, the environment of Nigerians, like that of many other Africans is full of gods and spirits, with whom one has to co-exist or subdue.

The presupposed omnipresence of the spirits and gods and the daily confrontation with them at times overshadows all human activities and to a great extent distorts the idea of the Supreme Being, God Himself. Gods were created and assigned to various objects of one's environment believed to have caused difficulties for mankind, a recognition of the spirit followed by an appeasement and eventually a control of the spirit. According to Afolabi Ojo, " the multiplicity of Yoruba gods is a logical consequence of their keen recognition of the numerous elements in their physical and biological environment, their awareness of the associated problems and their determination

to solve the problems Both their polytheism and their anthropomorphism found a basis in the profusion and variety of the geographic environment." 96

2.2,5 THE PHILOSOPHY OF NIGERIAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION:

Philosophy ist the love of truth, the pursuit of truth or the unending search of that which exists of itself; the ultimate and first reality that is responsible for that which has come to be. Its starting point is the knowledge of reality which we posses as well as all our daily knowledge, more especially those conveyed through scientific discoveries; all these types of knowledge make up the object of philosophy; philosophy, in turn, searches for the ultimate bases of these knowledge. 97

The truth of our knowledge is dependent on certain conditions, conditions under which our knowledge could be false or true. Our knowledge has to be true in order to be authentic, in other words, knowledge in order to be knowledge has to be the truth. On the other way round, truth is that which is, and exists independent of knowledge and ourselves, and we arrive at this truth independent of feelings, wishes and all internal and external pressure, whose truthfulness has yet to be proved.

Nigerian traditional religion is a philosophy in as far as it asks and searches for that from which all that is immanates and exists; it has nature as the knowledge of reality. To ask for the ultimate truth of this reality, is to ask of the supreme Being or the absolute: this enquiry is exactly the philosophy of Nigerien traditional religion. All that exists and constitutes our knowledge of reality has to be true in order to exist, that means, all that truly exists participates in the one truth, but in various degrees because the truth of our knowledge is dependent on certain conditions. The whole universe

96. C.J. Afolabi Ojo. Yoruba Culture. Ibadan 1971, p. 184

97. Walter Brugger. Philosophisches Wörterbuch, 9th Ed.

Freiburg, p. 238

and existence participate in this one truth; for the Nigerian traditional religion as well as for so many other people's of Africa, this truth is nothing but life, life in which both organic and inorganic materials participate. To possess this life is to live, and to live is to keep away death which seeks to annihilate this life. As E. Mveng, an African theologian puts it: "the vocation of human beings on earth is to ensure the victory of life over death".⁹⁸

Death in this sense does not only mean physical death, since there is still life after death, but the absence of this life, which is the truth and the only thing that is and in whom every other thing exists. This life is not dependent on the object in which it dwells but the other way round; man, like every other being with life, fights to retain this life, aware of the fact that his existence depends on this life.

Since we have decided to call that which exists in itself and equally in others without being dependent on its object of habitation or settlement - life, in Latin, (*vita*); we therefore name this principle of life - Vitalism and is different from the European form of vitalism⁹⁹ in that it attributes life to every thing that is both organic and inorganic.

The theory of vitalism is that all beings animate and inanimate are capable of being subjects, strive towards self-preservation, in other words all objects are capable of being personified. Man acknowledges this life and often comes into dialogue with it. The degrees of life in an object correspond to the degree or level of the object which they inhabit; for instance, the supreme Being has the perfection of life, and is himself the life, in which all other lives participate in various degrees. One cannot speak here of pantheism, since the supreme Being, the perfection of life, is not the same as a union of all other lives, but rather exists apart from an agglomeration of all types and degrees of life. Vitalism in this case is a system of thought in which one life exists in all beings in various degrees and thereby creating

98. Engelbert Mveng. In *African Theology en Route*, NY 1979, p. 135

99. Walter Bruggen, S.A.O., p. 360 f

species and genera. All men have the same degree of life which is quite different from the life of plants or dogs.

Spirits are seen as beings with a higher life than man, that means they have more knowledge and power than man; they are beings to whom man is subordinated, and as such he makes an effort to benefit from their power and knowledge. The relationship between the spirits and man is like the relationship between a senior brother and his five years younger brother, whom the senior one bullies, threatens and upon whom he imposes himself because he has more knowledge and power than the younger one to whom the senior one at times appears like a god. Nigerian traditional religion, like African traditional religion, is in practice an attempt to reconcile man with the beings with superior life, be it the deities, spirits or ancestors. These spirits, which are powers and objects of veneration so long as they remain unknown, can be won over through prayers, sacrifice, magic and offerings. In general, the philosophy of vitalism is the human strive for life, a strive to preserve the life in man and have its perfection after death in the community of the ancestors. Vitalism sees no end to human life, as long as man is industrious; after death, human life continues in two phases, one among the ancestors and the other among the members of the earthly family. Igbos call this earthly life which takes flesh Chi, a derivative and an attribute of the Chi-ukwu, the great Chi or the supreme Being, the Yorubas call it Ori.

According to Awolalu -

"Ori is a complex concept. It is the physical head as well as that force that is responsible for controlling one's being and has its correlation with Olodumare because it derives from Olodumare and is kept in being and wholeness by maintaining its correlation." 100

In a way, Ori is an attribute of the supreme Being, Olorun or Olodumare, given by birth to every individual: " the personality-soul which is believed to be capable of ruling, controlling and

100. J.Omosade Awolalu. Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites, p.9
a.a.O.

guiding the life and activities of man. The people believe that success or failure in life depends on Ori and its quality". "The fate of the individual lies in his Ori. For the Igbos, Chi or the life from the supreme Being, exists of itself, independent of man, and is the principle of one's beingness. Chi is also regarded as the principle of Igbo individualism. According to Njaka, " chi is the essence of any existence, animate or inanimate The higher an object, the higher its chi. The chi sustains all beings and forms all things." 101

From all we have seen, the philosophy of Nigerian traditional religion is an effort to sustain and enrich the life in man, an attribute of God, which accompanies man after death, whose enrichment on earth guarantees one's welfare in life and afterwards.

2.2,6 THE PRINCIPLE OF VITALISM AND THE CONCEPT OF TIME:

Mbiti, a well known African theologian, sees the African concept of time as the key to the understanding of the basic religious and philosophical concepts of the Africans. He defines the African concept of time as " a composition of events which have occurred, those which are immediately to occur". 102

Time demarcates events that follow one another, events that introduce one another, complement one another and strive for a harmony and totality. Events and the experiences of natural phenomena make the concept of time understandable; one can say that time is a product of events, without which there would be no time. On the other way round, life produces events as well as natural phenomena and is therefore the source of time. In other words, the concept of time is to a great extent dependent on the principles of vitalism (life).

Traditionally, time is dependent on the duration and completion of events as well as on man and nature who initiate the events; time is at the disposal of man and not the other way round because man has to say when the event he initiated is completed; time is

101. Elechukwu N.Njaka. Igbo Political Culture, Evanston 1974, p.32

102. J.Mbiti. African Religions and Philosophy, Ibadan 1982, p.17

produced and created by man, ¹⁰³ who creates the events that create the time. Just as time is a product of events without which there would be no time, so also is event the product of life (vitalism) and life the product of the supreme Being. Time is the measurement of events that introduce, necessitate, compensate and flow into one another, events that strive for a totality, just as man the initiator strives for his own end - an abundance of life.

According to Mbiti, the African traditional concept of time is two-dimensional, namely, " a long past, a present and virtually no future ". ¹⁰⁴ It may have been more appropriate to speak on infinite future instead of mere future. The supreme Being, with a far superior and a more perfect life than man, is more distant from man than the spirits with a little higher life than man; one cannot therefore say that Africans have no idea of the supreme Being, since they communicate more often with the spirits than with the supreme Being alone. We believe that the Africans conceive of both future and infinite future in the same way as they conceive of an infinite Being (God), who has no end. The concept of an infinite future does not dominate people's life just as the concept of an infinite Being, whom they know exists, does not dominate their daily lives.

In the same way that Africans concentrate a lot on the immediate higher beings, the spirits who enslave man so as to be free to contemplate fully on God, the source of life; so also do Africans pay much attention to the present and the past, which are to be mastered so as to pay much attention to the future.

Vitalism is the subject of time, without which there would be no event and no time. Man and nature create time as they strive towards a more abundant life, perfection and the source of all life - God Himself; a process which implies an infinite future, quite like the object of the process - the infinite Being (God).

103. Ibid. p. 19

104. Ibid. p. 17

2.2,7 THE THEOLOGY OF NIGERIAN TRADITIONAL RELIGION:

Nigerian traditional religion, like the Igbo and Yoruba traditional religion, is " a way of life for the survival of man". ¹⁰⁵ The religion occupies itself mainly with the material welfare of man in that man is made up of spirit and body, between which there is no dualism or difference of interests. The greatest impediments to man's welfare are the deities and spirits, who stay between him and the supreme Being, the perfection of life and human happiness. Nigerian traditional religion in its essence is a means of freeing man from the claws of the spirits and deities who inhabit the nature and restrict man's freedom. One need not, of course, forget the sociological and political roles of the spirits and deities in the society in which they were created by man. In dealing with the theology of Nigerian traditional religion, we shall regard the belief in spirits and deities as sociological factors evented to keep order and law, as well as to explain accidents and the irregularities of natural events; we shall concentrate our attention on the belief in one supreme Being, in the immortality of the ancestors and their re-incarnation. Since the religion does not so much occupy itself with these beliefs (God, immortality and reincarnation) which give meaning to the life of the people and form their world view and philosophy, we shall be speaking of the Theology of Nigerian traditional religion with regards to these beliefs which are in their nature purely religious.

Theology as a science of faith, is a systematic and a coherent reflection on God's revelation. ¹⁰⁶

For Africans, the supreme Being or God reveals Himself in nature, including man himself. To see these as means of God's revelation and not as gods themselves, is to conceive of a system, a coherency and the supremacy of the absolute Being. Africans articulate

105. Elechukwu N.NJaka a.a.O., p. 29

G.J. Afolabi Ojo a.a.O., p. 175 ff

106. Karl Rahner. Herders Theologisches Taschenlexikon,
Bd. 7, Freiburg i.B. 1973, p. 238

their beliefs and God's revelation in their prayers and offerings to God and the ancestors. We shall therefore come to see the prayers of the people as a means of reviewing their theology. According to a prominent Nigerian theologian, teacher and clergy, Bishop M. Eneja, the bishop of Enugu, prayer is within the reach of everyone; we are all related to God and prayer is the awareness of this relationship. He goes on to describe the awareness of this relationship as an encounter with God, an experience with God, which provokes a reaction of praise, thanks, contrition and petition. This experience of God's greatness, love and mercy, instill's confidence and courage in man, an awareness of His omnipresence increases one's sense of morality and discipline. As a result of the consciousness of our relationship with Him, we discuss and speak with Him as we could do with intimate friends or members of our own family. ¹⁰⁷

To discuss with Him intimately implies an experience and knowledge of Him. One expresses this knowledge in prayers and beliefs, as the following examples indicate:

Among the Igbos.

The intimate relationship with God is so closely felt that formal prayers are almost unknown. An analysis of the prayers shows that the people picture God as a benefactor; God is personified and He is prayed to in union with other deities, as the following prayers illustrate.

" Chineke eat kola. Chukwu Abiama take sweet white chalk.
Lord of Heaven, greeting. Son, king of Heaven, greeting.
Earth-Deity of Nnewi eat kola! Ancestors eat kola!
Who brings kola, brings life! We are asking for life!
Life of man, life of woman! Long life, and old age.
You God, eat whole! We eat in pieces! God come break
this kola for us, for we have no hands, but the fire
given to a child, does not hurt it. " ¹⁰⁸

107. M. Eneja. Prayer, Enugu 1983, p. 2 f

108. Emefie Ikenga Metuh. God & Man in African Religion,
Chapman, London 1981, p. 125

To offer one kola-nut (in Igbo-land) is to show one's hospitality and friendliness towards a guest. Offering kola-nut to God like to any good friend is to show how cordial and intimate the relationship between God and man is. Asking the deities and the ancestors to participate in the offering made to God is to show the unity between God (the creator), the deities, symbols of (law and order), and the ancestors, representing the culture and tradition of the people; to obey the law and order and follow the tradition is like obeying and respecting God. One normally says the purpose of the meeting after when the kola-nut has been eaten; now that God, the deities and the ancestors have participated of the kola-nut, they say why they are concentrating their attention actively on God (praying). As we have already seen, their petition in this case, as it is often the case, is life: " We are asking for life! Life of man, life of women! Long life, and old age". They do not ask to be like God or to be one with Him, they know that they are participating in His great life, they are eager to remain men and have their fullness of life. God abhors sin, affence, or behaviour which does not conform to the standard of love, it destroys the cohesion of the society, and in the process challenges honour of God the great King. 109

What the Igbos may regard as sin, and what form the corner stone of Igbo moral theology, are indicated in the following prayers of contrition and uprightness.

" Forgive who speaks evil. Forgive who speaks good. If there is no offence, there would be no forgiveness. But I did not kill any man nor did I kill any woman. I never removed any man's thing nor abducted another's wife".

Since God is upright, one conscious of His presence has to be also upright in order to enjoy His favour. An upright man believes that God is close to the upright as the following prayers indicate.

109. John S.Pobee. Toward an African Theology, Nashville, USA 1979, p. 118

" Both those who wish me good and those who wish me evil. What one plans for others so God plans for him. Let a visitor not maltreat his host nor host poison his guest. Who pursues a fowl, will fall. Let both the kite and the eagle perch; whoever tells the other not to, let his wings break.". ¹¹⁰

These prayers, first recorded in 1878 a missionary, indicate that the people picture God as a great king, who expects a certain amount of loyalty from his subjects in order to show them his favour. A king who does not necessarily require a temple, altar, or worship nor can be appeased with any amount of sacrifice or offering; ¹¹¹ His temple and altar are the people themselves in whom His chi dwells and the offering He would accept is one's dedication to the norms and laws of the community in which one lives for the welfare of the community and mankind. To this end, one should, among other norms, not kill, not steal, not commit adultery, not wishing any one evil, showing hospitality and give everyone the opportunity to have ones rights. These are not human laws, but cosmic divine laws made to maintain order in the universe. ¹¹² Progress for the Igbos implies order and stability which guarantees continuity and human welfare as the following prayers indicate.

"This Reality (Chukwu) within which we are!
Do thou keep safe man, keep safe woman,
protect yam, protect cocoyam,
protect goat, protect chicken.
Whatever one has, let it remain for him ...
Let yam be yam,
Let cocoyam be cocoyam,
Let man (human being), please be man!" ¹¹³

110. Emefie Ikenga Metuh. a.a.O., o. 125 f

111. Elechukwu Nwadibugha Njaka. a.a.O., p. 30

112. Aylward Shorter. African Culture and the Christian Church. London 1973, p. 62

113. Eugene Elochukwu Uzukwu. Igbo Spirituality Through Igbo Prayers. in Bulletin De Theologie Africaine, Kinshasa 1983, p. 209

Such a prayer depicts the extensive power of God over man, nature and the work of human hands. A God who looks after human works and interests can not be far from man; even though it is presumed that He dwells in the heavens, is at the same time everywhere. ¹¹⁴ God is not an abstract Being who is unconceivable but a Being whom we come to know according to the degree of His life, chi, in us - thus a limited knowledge of Him by an individual which is compensated with the knowledge of God possessed by the entire community.

God is the creator of the universe, the ancestors are regarded as the creator of the society; they are the ultimate rulers of a clan and the owners of the land in which their descendants dwell - their spirit which took flesh, as a poet puts it:

"Those who are dead have never gone away,
They are at the breast of the wife,
They are in the child's cry of dismay
And the firebrand bursting into life.
The dead are not under the ground,
They are in the fire that burns low ...
The dead are never dead. " ¹¹⁵

Entrance to the community of the ancestors is the striving of Africans, the possession of a higher life after death, of course, after the death of a man with children, wealth and must have attained an old age.

Ancestors are mediators between God and man; since they are nearer to God and know Him better than man, they are human intercessors. ¹¹⁶ Since human beings become ancestors and the ancestor spirit later becomes man, life is therefore one, and man is also one just as God is one. In this oneness of God, man and life (including life of nature, spirits and deities), an intimate relationship with God is developed, a sense of brotherhood/sisterhood and oneness with the dead and the entire nature is nourished.

114. I.K.Shuuya. The Encounter Between the New Testament and African Traditional Concepts. in Relevant Theology for Africa ed. by Hans Jurgen Becken, Natal 1973, p. 49

115. Aylward Shorter. a.a.O., p. 60, 61

116. Aylward Shorter. Ancestor Veneration Revisited. in Afer vol. 25, No. 4 August 1983, p. 199

The theology of Nigerian/African traditional religion can be said to be a theology of life, a theology that promotes life that exists in every object, bearing in mind that one is doing God a service. A theology which does not seek to do God a service directly but endeavours to promote the life of God in man and in nature, whereby a man attains the fullness of human nature and life as well as the ordinary nature. This view is common in Nigeria as we shall later see.

Among the Yorubas.

Yorubas like many other people's of Nigeria attach great importance to names, be it the names of spirits, new born babies or names given to the supreme Being. The Yoruba concept of the supreme Being is depicted through the names they give Him, names which do not only illustrate the belief of the people but also point at their theology.

He is called Olodumare, the King who "holds the sceptre, wields authority and has the quality which is superlative in worth, and he is at the same time permanent, unchanging and reliable", and is therefore associated with the name - Oyigiyigi Ota Aiku, meaning the mighty, durable rock that never dies.¹¹⁷ They also call Him Olorun - the owner of heaven or the Lord whose abode is in heaven. He is also called Eledaa, means the creator, the self-existing Being and source of all life. The supreme Being is also referred to as Alaaye, meaning, the Living One, the immortal One, who is also called Elemii, meaning, the Owner of life, responsible for all lives in whose hands the future lies. In order to show the dependence of man and the entire nature up on Him, the Yorubas call Him Olojo Oni, meaning, the Owner and controller of this day and its happenings.¹¹⁸ According to Parrinder, who wrote about the Olorun, God. "He is believed in by everybody as the creator of all things, the

117. J.Omosade Awolalu & P.Adelumo Dopamu. West African Traditional Religion a.a.O. pp. 38-39

118. J.Omosade Awolalu. Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites. a.a.O. pp. 11-12

almighty and allknowing, the giver of life and breath, and the final judge of all men. Although he is a great and distant God yet his name is daily heard in salutations, blessings, proverbs and riddles". 119

From the names given to Him which indicate their idea of Him as the source of all life, upon whom all that exist depends, who manifests His existence through the whole nature with various degrees of life, we find out that, in spite of the worship and existence of other powers and spirits, He is in no way contradicted nor do the powers usurp His absolute position as the source of life. Devotions and contemplation to Him are to some extent overshadowed by the allegiances to the various deities, spirits and powers, to such an extent that one could say that He is neglected. Since the supreme Being does not necessarily need anything from man, He therefore cannot be bribed or manipulated as the deities and spirits are, so religious acts consisting of worship, sacrifice and offerings are generally not made to the supreme Being.

Among the Ibibio.

The Ibibios call the supreme Being Abasi Ibom, the great God, the God who lives above or the God of the sky, the creator of all things. 120 Sacrifice is offered to God on only one occasion, namely, at the coronation of a chief, who is chosen by the people and approved through sacrificial ritual by God Himself, because the chief is to take up the earthly functions of God, who presides over the people He created. One therefore has to seek the approval of God before appointing and coronating a person as His earthly representative. In this case, sacrifice is used as a means of communicating with Him on such an occasion. The descent of a vulture on the items sacrificed to God on such an occasion (according to tradition) publicly indicates that God approves the nomination

119. E.G. Parrinder. African Traditional Religion. a.a.O., p. 34

120. J.Omosade Awolalu & P. Adelumo Dopamu. a.a.O., p. 41

of the candidate for chieftaincy by accepting the sacrifice. The victim of such a sacrifice (a chick) is not consumed by the people since it is sacrificed to God, just as no one eats at the same table with the chief.

" In Ibibio custom, out of reverence, the ordinary people do not eat at the same table or from the same plate with the chief. Yet this does not detract from the bond of love existing between the chief and his subjects. It is thus to avoid symbolically sharing a meal with God that the Ibibio do not eat any sacrifice offered to God ... a chick is offered as a symbol of the innocence of the chief-elect and of divine protection for him, not as a sign of contempt or unfriendliness. " 121

According to the Ibibios, God is the king who presides over His people, whose affairs are looked after by men and deities. Among the various people's of Nigeria, the supreme Being, God, the maker of the whole universe, is not a part of the nature which He made, nor does He encroach upon human freedom, which in Africa as a whole is portrayed by the community will or freedom. God left to mankind the laws of nature as help and guidelines, from where man derives the natural laws meant to regulate the human behaviour and life. In quest of keeping the laws of nature which create uniformity and continuity and thereby assuming the character of a divine law, gods or divinities were created in order to enforce the laws of nature on the people, and meant to promote human well-being and cosmic harmony. Misfortune and evil are the consequences of not adhering to these laws; such are regarded as punishments from the gods (lives) inhabiting the form of nature in question. To make human laws independent of the laws of nature is to free man from his enslavement by nature, and to extoll the life in man above all other forms of life is to uphold the direct relationship between man and God. A theology of the Nigerian traditional religion

121. Justin S. Ukpong. Sacrificial Worship in Ibibio Traditional Religion. in: *Journal of Religion in Africa*. vol. XIII, 3 1982, Leiden pp. 182, 185

has to start by removing the obstacle between man and God, namely, the deities and spirits (gods), so that one can contemplate without deviation God and human nature.

According to Nigerians, each individual has an immortal attribute of God, which many people, because of its incomprehensible nature, term human destiny. The Igbos call it *chi*, the Yorubas call it *ori*, the Edo call it *ehi*, the Nupe call it *kuci*, the Ijos call it *oru agbani*, the Idoma call it *owo*.¹²²

This attribute of God in man has the character of a divine law in the individual. This Godly attribute in man is not a representative of God in man but man's share in the life of God meant to bring fortune to man. God is seen as the one who promotes human welfare, prosperity and long life. To be successful and prosperous is to be spiritual and beloved by God. A theology of Nigerian traditional religion has to be a theology that promotes human prosperity in accordance with the laws of the ancestors and the community.

2.2,8 CONCLUSION:

With regards to all we have so far seen, the Nigerian traditional religion has much to do with law and order which promote stability and continuity, which in turn guarantee human welfare and prosperity. The religion governs the entire aspect of life (culture), all in an attempt to pacify the supernatural powers believed to exist every where, powers with a higher type of life than man. According to a lecture delivered by one Robert Van Pelt (at the 15th Annual Jewish-Christian Bible Week in Bendorf).

" In archaic cultures, like the Israelite in the time of Solomon, the problems man faced in his relation with the divine, the supernatural, were quite different from ours. We desperately try to find the imprints of God in a secularised society. Archaic man did not have to search for it: the numinous was everywhere. Each tree, each well, each mountain or hill had its spirit, belonged to a God, all of whom demanded honour, respect and attention. The problem

122. J. Omosade Awolalu & P. Adelumo Dopamu. a.a.O., pp.163-168
John V. Taylor. The Primal Vision.SCM London 1975, pp.53-55

archaic man faced was how to create in this world a kind of free haven, where he would be free from the unbearable burden which the gods imposed on the shoulders of man. Almost all cultures have found a way out, have been able to shake off, at least in daily life, the yoke of the supernatural cosmos. And the way they did so has been virtually the same all over the world: one created a special place which was designated to carry the burden, 'liberating' the remaining space. This special place which was set apart was the so-called 'holy place'.¹²³

It is the creation of these holy places - altars, shrines, sacred bushes, rivers, hills etc. that gave rise to the outward aspect of the religion, to free man from the yoke of the supernatural powers. In the actual fact, the creation of the holy places constitutionalized and solidified the yoke of the supernatural powers on man; that is why we are of the opinion that only a philosophy and a theology of the beliefs and religion of the people can liberate the people completely from the yoke of supernatural powers, by illustrating the nonexistence of these powers which rob man of his own powers. Religion as it is being practised in Africa as whole may be defined as a goal, namely, security in life and in death, and the process of attaining this goal, a process which is depicted in ritual, ceremony, worship and prayers.¹²⁴ A philosophy of such a religion examines the starting point, the object and the ultimate end of the religion. In this case, the starting point of the religion is the quest of life, defeat and prevention of death and misery which were believed to be the punishment of some violation of some cosmic order or of the law of nature. The object of such a search for security are the gods and spirits believed to be inhabiting the earth with man and who are in control of human affairs and nature. The ultimate end of the religion is human welfare and prosperity, and

123. Jonathan Magonet. Concept of God in the Hebrew Bible. in The Month. Jan. 1984, London p. 7

124. Roy Sieber. Some Aspects of Religion and Art in Africa. in African Religions, A Symposium, ed. by Newell S. Booth. p. 145

that is why we propose a philosophy called vitalism, which attributes life to all things and at the same time bears in mind that it is man himself who attributes life to all that is except to mankind. Nature and the cosmos are there to promote human welfare and be of service to man and not the other way round. Man is living in order to have a fullness of life as a man with a future, a life he has in common with God and his fellow human beings. Theology of the religion concentrates on this life of God in man and man's relation to God, who is believed to be far from earth (in heaven) but at the same time present in everyone. A God who does not require man's sacrifices, temples, shrine, or altars but rather social order and human welfare (a role the gods and deities were believed to have been playing) which has now been taken over by the society and its laws. Belief in reincarnation and the veneration of ancestors is an important aspect of the theology, in that it gives meaning to human life and individual existence; man conceives eternal life as the continuum of life between the present state in the body and that in the spiritual world. Just as God created the world so also do the people believe that the ancestors are responsible for human society and its laws and traditions. As a writer on Zulu religion, which is African religion indicated:

" society is one and consists of the living and the dead; the community is a continuum without a break. The interest of the elders in their children not only springs from this concern for the welfare of the children themselves but also from a concern for their own welfare and the welfare of their ancestors who are now dead. They are concerned with the continuance of life of both the dead and the living as one, and even the continuance of those who are yet unborn." 125

Ancestor cult is an integral part of African theology and worldview, giving meaning to human existence and elevating the welfare of the society above individual welfare by giving meaning to morality and law as guarantors of human prosperity - the aim of the Godly life in man and of the theology. A missionary, commenting on African spiritual writers once said:

125. Donald M. Timkulu. Some Aspects of Zulu Religion in: African Religions, A Symposium. *ibid.*, p. 19

"The African spiritual writers ... are unanimous in their commitment to humanity. They are not preaching an inward-looking, spiritual development. They do not go in for spiritualism...; their aim is the integral development of human beings in community, enabling them to take control of their own lives and to make the right choices by themselves." 126

We would conclude this chapter by saying that the aim of the religion is to assure the security of the community both living and dead, to help man enjoy the fullness of life. To this end, we proposed a philosophy and a theology which would replace the gods and spirits with supremacy of the society rooted in the belief in the ancestors, the architects of human society, and in Gods attribute in every individual, meant to indicate God's love for and nearness to everyone. Vitalism is a general concept for the aims and world-view of the people, to recognize the life in others including nature, (life from God) and at the same time to see the supremacy of human life, meant to be nourished by the life in the nature. The religion does not aim at making one a spirit or a god nor does it seek a union with God, but rather it helps man to enjoy the fullness of life put at his disposal by God.

We have talked of Nigerian traditional religion as if it were a religion like a Christian denomination, like the Roman Catholic Church with a precise liturgy, dogma, moral and church law. As we earlier mentioned, every village in every ethnic group has its own peculiar deity and spirits which are meant to protect the people not only through their supposed supernatural powers but also through the laws, traditions and moral codes of conduct promulgated in their name. A good life is a life that corresponds to their will, that means, for one to live a good life, one has to be led by the spirit of the deity of the village that is responsible for the laws, interpersonal communication and man - god relationship. The disposition of the deities are reflected by the condition of men in the

126. Aylward Shorter. African Christian Spirituality. Maryknoll New York 1980, p. 16

society, whereby it is believed that wealth and health are signs of one who lives according to the will of the gods, while sickness and poverty are signs of the divine displeasure, a state which one has to correct through sacrifices and offerings. All religious activities are aimed at the welfare of man, that man may have life and have it in full. Life is a product of obedience to the law and tradition, and since these laws and traditions slightly vary from one village to the other and more still from one ethnic group to the other, people therefore tend to respect in every village the laws and traditions of the people even though one is not born in the village or does not belong to the ethnic group. Such practices give rise to a mutual respect among the varying liturgies and versions of the Nigerian traditional religion, in other words, the various versions of the religion not only tolerate one another but also have one another as an authentic forms of meeting up to the will of the deity of the people who is supposed to guide all who dwell in the area of his influence. People do not discriminate against worshippers of a particular deity foreign to them; man is generally seen as one whose future and prosperity depend on how far he does the will of the gods or deities. If we acknowledge the fact that these deities are the works of communal creation to enhance law and order, and as such do not exist, and replace them with the law of God in human hearts and the will of God that all men should live in love, respect and harmony, we are left with a mutual sense of respect, love and belonging based on the will of God. One accepts not only traditions of the other but also his person which is a product of the traditions and laws. One deals directly with God whose will for one is the obedience of the laws, tradition and moral codes of conduct of one's society. This leads to what one may call an ecumenical approach to Nigerian traditional religion buttressed by one constitution of the Federal Republic of Nigeria. By so doing, one prepares the Nigerian traditional religion for a

constructive dialogue with Islam and Christianity and clears the way for a wider approach to ecumenism.

But since we are mainly concerned with the Christian churches of Nigeria and their unity which may lead to a unity of Nigerians, we may now come to consider the Christian religion in its origin, purpose and benefits to Nigerians.

Christianity has to take the Nigerian traditional religion into consideration in order to be successful among the peoples of Nigeria. Nigerian traditional religion and other peculiarities are the things which would make the Nigerian Christianity unique and peculiar.

We shall come to see how far the traditional Nigerian concept of God differs from those of the ancient people's of the Near-East, especially the Jews whose tradition and culture Christianity took up, all with the aim of showing that Christianity is not all that foreign to Nigerians. We shall see how the ancient religions were governed by the same principle of life with its maximization as a reflection of God's favour and love.

We believe that the only Christianity which could unify Nigerians to the greater glory of God and mankind would be a Christianity which like the " modified Nigerian traditional religion " (the removal of the intermediary roles of the deities and gods) would serve no other interest other than that of God, which is that mankind should have life and have it in full.

As an image of God who has the fullness of life, man has the natural duty of being like God, aiming at a union with him, which is the fullness of life. The OT depicts the response of a people to this will and commandment of God, man's ups and downs and God's faithfulness.

CHAPTER THREE

THE JEWISH (BIBLICAL) CONCEPT OF GOD:

3.0 INTRODUCTION:

The word Jew was originally a name for a person from Judah, a city in the southern kingdom of Israel, nevertheless, the northern kingdom named Israel was quite different from the southern kingdom named Judah (2kg.16,1-7) whose inhabitants were called Jews (2kg.25,22-25; Neh.1,2-3).

After the destruction of the northern kingdom and the Jewish exile, the name became attributable to all Israelites (Mt.2,2-6). The name Jew, is often used as a glorious title (Rom.2,17), implying a special privilege from God, a privilege derived from the very meaning of Judah - "I will give glory to God"(Gn.29,35), and by the reason of the blessing of Jacob - "your brothers shall praise you" (Gn.49,8). According to St.Paul, being a Jew is a blessing and something to be proud of; in Acts 22,3, he proudly proclaimed, " I am a Jew", even Apollo, a convert to Christianity, is referred to as a Jew (Acts 18,24). Belief makes one a real Jew and an unbelieving Jew is a Jew in appearance only (Rom.2,28); and a Christian could therefore be called a Jew in spirit(Rom.2,29) St. Paul believes that the Jews have special privileges over other peoples, including the non-Jewish Christians (Rom.2, 9f; 1,16; Mt.15, 24; Acts 13,46; 18,6). Jews have advantages over others; they are "entrusted with the oracles of God, (Rom.3,2b), whose unfaithfulness will never nullify the faithfulness of God (Rom.3,3) because"the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable" (Rom.11,29), and they are beloved for the sake of their forefathers (Rom.11,28).

If one would ask the reason behind the many privileges and advantages of being a Jew, St. Paul would say it is all because of the very fact that "they are Israelites, and to them belong the sonship, the glory, the covenants, the giving of the law, the worship, and the promises; to them belong the patriarchs, and of their race, according to the flesh, is the Christ."(Rom.9,4).

Looking back at their experiences and history, they regard themselves as the chosen people of God, and this was the central idea of their selfconsciousness, politics, economy, religion and law. We shall next be considering the various ways they might have conceived of God and their experiences of Him.

3.1 THE ANCIENT JEWS AND THEIR NEIGHBOURING PEOPLES:

The concept of God in Israel cannot be thought of without reference to their encounter with the religion and culture of their neighbouring peoples. The Old Testament gives an account of the gradual, long and wearisome process to a clear and distinct concept/concepts of God quite distinct from those of other peoples of the world. The concept of God, Jahwe, as a people's or tribal God was most probably born in Egypt and made vivid after the exodus. The God of Abraham, Issac and Jacob became the God of the entire people of Israel, a God mightier than the Egyptian god of the sun and the Canannite Baal. The exact historical circumstances which led the Jews into Egypt are not yet known; they may have entered as nomads in search of water and fresh fields. The time of their entry is dated around 1305 - 1225, the time of Pharaohs Sethi I. and Ramses II.¹ This was in Egypt the period of the new kingdom, the 18th. and 19th. dynasty, when they were enslaved and forced to work for the projects of Ramses II at Pithom.² Many famous hymns like the hymn on Amun (an Egyptian god), the thousand songs on Amon of Theben etc. were written in this very period, so that one could say that the Israelites were influenced by this hymns which have monotheistic tendencies.³ The Old Testament indicates in various texts the influence of Egypt on Israel; an empire which earlier had oppressed the Hebrews (Ex.1-13); the refuge of the starving patriarchs (Gn.12,10; 42 ff); a land of exiles (1kg.11,40; Jer.26,21), a refuge for the defeated Israelites

1. Josef Scharbert. Sachbuch zum Alten Testament. Aschaffenburg 1961, pp. 238, 240.

2. Raymond Brown, J.Fitzmyer, R.E.Murphy. The Jerome Biblical Commentary, N.Y. 1968, 75:32.

3. Günther Roeder. Ägyptische Mythen u.Legenden, Zürich 1960, p.14

(Jer. 42 f), eventually a land of refuge for Christ (Mt.2, 13), just as it had been for the patriarchs. Egypt was in spite of that described as a temptation for people without ideals (Ex.14,12; Nm.11,5), a land highly respected by the Hebrews and which served as a model of an ideal state (2 Sam.20,23-26; 1Kg. 4,1-6) for David and Solomon who made efforts to copy the Egyptian administrative and legal procedures. Egyptians were often asked for help by Samaria (Hos.7,11) and by Jerusalem (2Kg.17,4; 18,24; Is.30,1-5; Jer. 2,18; Ez. 29,7) .

In the area of culture and learning, Moses, the leader, instructor, lawgiver and God's spokesman, was educated in Egyptian wisdom and culture (Acts.7,22). One of the places where the Egyptian influence on Hebrew thinking and literature is made vivid are the psalms, most of which run parallel with the Egyptian mythology, hymns and prayers. ⁴ In spite of the Hebrew taste for Egyptian culture, the book of wisdom describes Egypt as the land of idolatry and magic (Ws.15, 14-19); and Jeremiah warns the people against Egyptian seduction which alienates the people from their God, Jahwe (Jer. 44,8).

Another nation or people whose culture influenced the Jews was that of Canaan, which 1.Mos. 10,19 says lies between Sidon and Gaza, but according to other sources extends northwards to Syrian, Phoenician and Palestinian coasts. ⁵ An area which the simple, uncivilized, nomadic and liberated Egyptian Jewish slaves invaded and captured, a land reputed for its high culture and civilization. The conquest of Canaan was believed to have been accomplished miraculously by Joshua (Josh.2,6) and the territory allotted to the tribes of Israel (Josh. 13-21), who were now united by their common reverence to Jahwe. The Israelites later learnt the arts of civilization from the Canaanites, which they might have forgotten during their 40 years wandering in the desert.

4. Walter Beyerlin. Grundrisse zum Alten Testament: Religionsgeschichtliches Textbuch z.Alten Testament, Göttingen 1975,pp.31-53

5. Klaus Koch, E.Otto, Roloff&H.Schmoldt. Reclams Bibellexikon, Stuttgart 1978, p. 263

According to Is.19,18, Israel took over the language of the Canaanites, which implies also the Canaanite culture and life, ⁶ a process which might have jeopardised the worship of Jahwe and eventually the protest of some conservatives like the prophet Jeremiah (Jer.35, 1-11). Before they settled in Canaan, their God, Jahwe, was more or less a nomadic God in His essence, a God of history who had saved Israel. In Canaan, the Jews met another situation believed to be outside the area of influence of Jahwe, a God who had become a God of history. There they had to face the problem of soil fertility and agriculture the arts which they learnt from the Canaanites, who believed that Baal was responsible for agriculture and fertility. The Jews therefore in copying the Canaanite art of farming had to copy also the religious rites associated with it, thus a religious syncretism. ⁷

3.1,1 THE EGYPTIANS AND THEIR GODS:

In view of the very fact that the Jews lived for a very long time in Egypt, where they were slaves and eventually came into contact with the many Egyptian tribal and village gods and the attempts of the various ruling Pharaohs to make their tribal gods the supreme god ⁸ (Henotheism) we are therefore going to have a closer look at these gods and their attributes.

In the dynastic times, each village and tribe had its own deity which protected the tribe and was consequently called the lord or mistress of the tribe or community. These gods not only had special manner of making themselves manifest but also insisted on special sacrifices and rituals just as the Yoruba deities. ⁹ Besides these gods, the Egyptians had conceived of the existence of one great supreme God just like many peoples of Africa. ¹⁰

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6. Robert H.Pfeiffer. Religion in the Old Testament, NY 1961, p.64
 7. Raymond Brown, Fitzmyer & Murphy. a.a.O. 75:48
 8. Günther Roeder. Die Ägyptische Götterwelt. Zürich 1959, p. 8
 9. J.Omosade Awolalu.Yoruba Beliefs and Sacrificial Rites,a.a.O.,pp 21 ff
 10. E.A.Wallis Budge.Cooks Handbook for Egypt&Sudan,a.a.O., p.642

The creation of the universe: According to several Egyptian texts, the universe was created by a god from material. The god, called Khepera, the creator, first created the rising of the sun by mere words (he just wished it), next, Khepera created the gods Shu and Tefnut, who in turn made other gods. Quite different from the creation of the gods and the sun, who were created out of nothing, Khepera created men and women from the tears which dropped from his eyes upon his own members. ¹¹

A theology popular in the Egyptian ancient city of Heliopolis identifies the god Ptah as the creator of all things including the nine Gods Temu, Shu and Tefnut, Geb and Nut, Osiris and Isis, Set and Nephthys, which, according to a discovered text, could be regarded as nine attributes or powers of the God Ptah. These are said to be his teeth, his lips, which pronounced the words of creation; his heart, his eyes, his ears, his nose, and tongue. He spoke and all things came to be; hands began to work, and all the parts of the body assumed their functions. Having created all things, He (Ptah) rested. ¹² From every indication, the text suggests an inclination towards monotheism, an elimination of polytheism, the creation of a state religion and political unity, as was the case with the Jews. Another text narrates the discussion between the goddess Isis and the god of the sun Re. Isis wanted by all means to know the secret name of the god of the sun. Re started by narrating the creative works of his hands. He said, ... I am he, who made the earth and the mountains and what ever exists on them. I am he, who made the waters so that the heavenly cow could exist. I am he, who made the bull for the herd of cows, so that the joy of love could be made known. I am he, who made the heavens and the secrets of the two horizons, so that the souls of the gods could dwell there. I am he, who made the hours which make up the days. I am he, who made the new year's feasts and the overflowing waters ... ¹³

11. Ibid. p.645

12. Walter Beyerlin. a.a.O., p. 32

13. Ibid. p. 33

From all indication, Re assumes all the functions of all the other gods and claims responsibility for natural occurrences, including human life.

A text illustrates how the world looked before creation, in other words, the loneliness of God the creator. The text goes on to say ... as the heavens were not yet in existence, as the earth was not yet in existence ... as mankind was not yet in existence and the gods not yet born ... Amun is the God, who existed as no other god existed, as there was no name for any other thing. ¹⁴

There are other reports about the destruction of the world by God the creator as is illustrated in a text called the death text, where Atum told Osiris that he would destroy the world, that every thing would go back to its original form, and went on to say ... I am together with Osiris that which will remain. ¹⁵ The various texts identify different Gods as the creator. Amun, Re, and Ptah are supreme Gods with no equals, Gods who hide their real names. The three are presumed to be the same God who at one time calls himself Amun, at another time, Re, and at another time calls himself Ptah. In this way, the almighty one is seen under three perspectives, and these three aspects have political and geographical significance, representing the three important strategic cities, namely, Theben, Heliopolis and Memphis. On a political level, the Pharaoh sees himself as the son of God and consequently as a god also. He is seen as the son of the God of the sun, Re, a belief which originated as far back as the 5th dynasty. The king, as the son of God, conducts all religious services himself; he builds the temple and is in principle the only one eligible to enter into the holy place of God. The priests officiate in his name. ¹⁶ King Ramses II sees himself as an offspring of Re, who watches over him; Re, who nursed him. According to him, Re was as he (Ramses) was only a baby the lord of all

14. Ibid. p. 34

15. Jan Assmann. Ägyptische Hymnen und Gebete. München 1975, p. 318, song 300.

16. S.A.Tokarew. Die Religion in der Geschichte der Völker. Köln 1968, p. 408

things until he grew up to take up rulership. ¹⁷

An important development in the Egyptian concept of God and theology was the idea of uniting the various gods held in the three regions as supreme gods, making each of them an attribute of a one supreme God, namely, the sun god. Two gods, Amun and Re, were unified to become Amun-Re, and are said to be one and as the animating God of life, they are one and the same being. ¹⁸

A hymn to the honour of Amun reads,... "Blessed is he who sits at the hand of Amun who leads the timid, saves the poor, gives life to those whom he loves, those who build beautiful altars for him in Theben ... Oh my God, the lord of the gods". In the same hymn, he is addressed as Amun-Re, the lord of Karnak. The hymn goes on to say ... "Give me your hand and save me !... You are the only God, and there is none like you. You are Re, who is in heaven, Atum, who created man. Who hears the prayers of those who cry to him, who rescues man from the hands of the powerful, the perfect leader of every one." ¹⁹

On the religious aspect of the social life, the various tribal and provincial gods are being unified under one supreme God, and on the political side, an absolute monarchy, under the king, a personification of the God, is propagated. Temples (God's house), were built for the God; the holiest place, is named "the great Sit", just like the king's throne, ²⁰ which is also a great Sit.

3.1,2 THE CANAANITES AND THEIR GODS:

Among many gods, most prominent of which are the baals (masters) of various provinces and towns of Canaan, the god El is singled out as the supreme God; he is worshiped at various sanctuaries, under various titles. El Elyon (God Most High) was worshiped at Jerusalem; El Olam (God Eternal) was worshiped at Beer-sheba; El Berith (God of the Covenant) was worshiped at Shechem; El was

17. Walter Beyerlin. a.a.O., p. 54

18. Wolfgang Helck, Wolfhart Westendorf. Lexikon der Ägyptologie Bd. 5 Wiesbaden 1984, p. 1091

19. Walter Beyerlin. a.a.O., pp. 55, 67

20. Kurt Lange, Max Hirmer. Ägypten . München 1978, p. 39 f

worshiped in all these three sanctuaries by the Jewish patriarchs.²¹ Theoretically, El is the supreme God, the creator of the entire universe. The Ugaritic texts call him "bannay banuwat", the creator of Creatures, whose words are everlasting and wisdom, the God who dwells at the source of the two rivers. El is also called "ab adm", the father of mankind.²² Practically, the god Baal assumes a supreme position in the daily life of the people. Baal, is not a creator like El, but keeps all things in life; he is responsible for the nourishment of all living things, man, animals and crops, and is therefore called the god of fertility and vegetation. El, a Deus otiosus, the head of the community of gods (pantheon), is a king like Baal; unlike the kingdom of Baal, his kingdom is endless, unalterable and static. The kingdom of Baal is dynamic and has to protect his kingdom against enemies by building temples. His defeat by his rivals, the gods Jam and Mot (death) means death for mankind, his triumph over his rivals brings life and prosperity to mankind. Baal has the ability of resurrection, restoration of life and renovation of his destroyed kingdom.²³

The Canaanites pray to El and other members of the family of the gods for assistance. Prayers and offerings are made to El, the mightiest among the gods. According to the Ugaritic text, prayers like this are made to El and to other gods:

"Oh El! Oh sons of El!

Oh the community of the sons of El!

Oh the gathering of the sons of El!

Oh Tkmn and Schmn!

Oh El and Aschirat!

Be gracious, Oh El!

Be a support, Oh El!

Be a salvation, Oh El!

El, hurry! El, come quickly!

To the help of Zaphons,

21. Raymond Brown, Fitzmyer, Murphy. Jerome Biblical Comm. a. a. O., 77:16

22. Elisabeth Klein. Die Schöpfungsmythen. Zürich 1964, pp. 177 f

23. Georg Fohrer. Das Alte Testament. I, Gütersloh 1969, pp. 83 f

To the help of Ugarits.
With the spear, Oh El,
With the battleaxe, Oh El,
Because of the burnt offering, Oh El,
Because of the constant offerings, Oh El,
Because of the morning offerings, Oh El." 24

This was a Canaanite prayer in need to the only one who could save, the only one who could order the gods to react to mankind's problems and needs; the mighty one, the battle leader who fights for those who hope in him, for those who constantly offer him burnt sacrifice and morning offerings. There seems to be a division of labour between El and Baal. El, the creator of all things, the father of the gods, is a place of refuge and salvation and is moreover a father to mankind. Baal is responsible for fertility, growth and vegetation; he nourishes the life El installed in nature, including man.

Among the important elements of the Canaanite religion are the belief in a great number of powerful gods in human form, who act not on principles and ideas but on their personal wills and interests; the belief in the sinfulness of man, his dependence on the gods and his hope of their mercy. Other important elements are: the belief in the righteousness of the gods; the absence of mysticism in the theology; the clear demarkation between god and man. 25 Baal, the god of nature, influences the daily life of the people and many towns and villages are dedicated to him, a god interested in human affairs. One can not talk of monotheism in this case, since El is clearly distinguished from the active Baal and the other deities who were created by El himself, but the way is made open by calling El the father of the gods and of the universe. We shall soon come to see how the Jews replaced El with Jahweh to whom they attributed all the powers of Baal and thereby making way for a monotheism.

24. Walter Beyerlin. a.a.O., pp. 239 - 240

25. Georg Fohrer. Geschichte der Israelitischen Religion
Berlin 1969, pp. 29 - 30

3.1,3 THE SUMERIANS AND THEIR GODS:

The Sumerians are the inhabitants of Lower Mesopotamia, a people in whose language one of the world's oldest texts were written. The people are made up of the Babylonians and Assyrians. Their principal gods are Anu, Ea and Enlil. ²⁶

The Babylonians.

The Babylonian empire witnessed the centralization of one god, namely, Marduk, the Babylonian patron. He became the head of the numerous Babylonian gods, and this theology went so far as to describe and identify other gods as attributes of Marduk. Mesopotamian gods were seen as subjects and attributes of Marduk, just as the Babylonians were seen in this time, 2.000 years before Christ, as the most powerful nation in Mesopotamia. ²⁷ Traditionally, Anu, most likely a personification of the heavens, is the most prominent among the gods. He is the totality of the Babylonian Pantheon, the seven gods which make up the universal godhood. Anu is the general name for godhood. Anu is all things; he is both man and woman. He is the heavenly, creating man, while Antu is the earthly, female, passive principle, from there one can picture the Babylonian conception of heaven and earth as one, just like the godpair, Anu and Antu. ²⁸

Anu is the creator of the universe as the following text indicates:

" As Anu created the heavens,
As the heavens the earth created,
As the earth the rivers created,
As the rivers the canals created,
As the Morass the worm created,
Came the worm complaining to Schamasch". ²⁹

26. S.A. Tokarew. Die Religion in der Geschichte der Völker. a.a.O., p. 432

27. Ibid., p. 434

28. Johannes Hehn. Die Biblische und die Babylonische Gottesidee
Leipzig 1913, p. 19

29. Walter Beyerlin. a.a.O., p. 104

A hymn to the honour of the goddess Ishtar addresses her as the one elevated and enhanced by Anu, Enlil and Ea, the Babylonian godly trinity; she was made a goddess by the three.³⁰ Anu is the king of the gods and Enlil the lord of all nations.³¹ Further, there are texts which indicate the existence of prophets who spoke for the gods. Some prophesised the coming of a prince who would rule for 18 years, bring prosperity, security and wealth to the people but would later be killed in a rebellion. Another prophetic text spoke of the destruction of the city Babel and the exile that would follow; another spoke of the restoration of Babel through another prince who would bring back prosperity to the people. There were instances of warnings, admonitions and promises from the gods through the prophets, who called themselves servants of the Lord.³²

Most interesting are the Babylonian books of wisdom, most of which speak of the wisdom of God which every one should seek, his grace, justice and ways lead to prosperity. Those whose God and patron-spirit have abandoned, are doomed to ruin.³³

According to the Babylonians, an individual has a special, personal contact with a god, whom he calls " my god ", and a spirit whom he calls "my patron spirit". These are responsible for the individual's welfare and prosperity. For those who live according to the precepts of their gods enjoy prosperity and happiness. There are also indications showing that it does not necessarily follow that the faithful and devout adherents prosper; the evil and those who do not honour the gods nor seek their ways are also said to prosper.

Hammurabi, a famous Babylonian king, who ruled from 1728 -1686 BC, produced one of the world's most famous cuneiform codes, was instructed by the sun-god and god of justice, Shamash to compose a moral code of conduct, made up of 282 laws. These laws shed

30. Ibid., p. 134

31. Ibid., p. 142

32. Ibid., pp. 143 - 152

33. Ibid., pp. 159 - 161

light on the social organization of those days and provide astonishing parallels to the laws of the famous Jewish Pentateuch.³⁴

3.1,4 THE ASSYRIANS AND THEIR GODS:

The Assyrians, named after their city Assur, were controlling Mesopotamia and a large extent of the Near-East in the 15th - 13th cent. BC. Their culture and religion are largely associated with the Babylonian in whose language most of them wrote.³⁵

The Assyrians are generally known as worshippers of the hosts of heaven, atmospheric gods; their gods were mainly gods of heaven and were associated with the heavenly bodies. Their principal gods were, Marduk, Shamash, Sin, Nebo, Ninib, Nergal, Adad, Nusku, Bel, etc.

Assyrians conceive God as the creator of heaven and earth; a function attributable to many of their gods, as the following hymns indicate;

To the god Ninib,

"O Lord of heaven who created the earth".

To the god Sin:

"Creator of the land, founder of sanctuaries, proclaimer of names".

To the god Shamash:

"Creator of the totality of heaven and earth, art thou O Shamash".

To the god Asshur:

"Creator of the upper universe, builder of the mountains, Creator of the gods, begetter of the goddesses."

To the god Marduk:

"Heaven and earth are thine;

The space of heaven and earth is thine".

"The creator of all mankind".³⁶

34. Raymond Brown, Fitzmyer & Murphy. The Jerome Biblical Commentary. a.a.O., 3:52; 75:20

35. Ibid., 11: 4-6

36. Charles Gordon Cumming. The Assyrian and Hebrew Hymns of Praise New York 1934, pp. 120, 123

Assyrian gods are not gods of the abstract universe, but gods of nature, gods who intermingle with worldly and natural beings and developments.

The god Enlil is said to be the god who

" makest to abound pure oil and milk:

Father Enlil, keeper of the plants of the garden;

Keeper of the grain fields are thou".

To the god Marduk:

" Lord of the lands, king of heaven and earth, who heaps up abundance,

Lord of the living things, merciful one, increaser of the wheat".

" Thou distributest the food of cultivation to all habitations".

" Thou suppliest the food of god and goddess, The creator among them art thou".

" Thou causest to rain the abundant rains, mighty floods".

" Who guidest the rivers in the midst of the mountains, Who openest the springs in the midst of the hills.

Thou maintainest abundance without end, the dried up spring thou openest." 37

The power of the gods is manifested through their spoken words; their words are personified, clothed with strength like the gods themselves. The words of Marduk are said to be:

" awe inspiring.

Counsellor, favorite of Ea, whose word cannot be withstood,

To whose powerful word the great Igigi give heed.

(Marduk) The exalted hero, whose word is unalterable.

Thy word is a lofty net which over heaven and earth thou spreadest out:

Unto the sea it turns, the sea takes fright:

Unto the marsh it turns, the marsh laments:

To the flood of Euphrates it turns;

The word of Marduk stirs up the bottom". 38

37. Ibid., pp. 124, 126

38. Ibid., pp. 127, 128

Almost all the gods are praised and exalted above all other gods, every region praised its own god above all other gods, attributes more power to him than to the gods of other regions. Each god is king of other gods, e.g., Marduk is said to be:

" Great one ruler of the gods",

He is praised as the incomparable god.

" O mighty God, to whom there is no rival in the assembly of the great gods.

Marduk, among all gods thou excellest.

(Prince) of heaven and earth who hath not his equal"

" What god in heaven or earth can be compared to thee,
Thou art high over all of them

Among the gods superior is thy counsel". 39

Not only are the gods glorious but also their names which are to be held sacred by all. Marduk's name is sacred; the Assyrians said:

" Exceeding great is thy name, Marduk mighty one.

Thy name is altogether good in the mouths of the peoples". 40

An important attribute of the gods is their merci fulness and compassion. The gods have the power to help and rescue men from danger and tribulation, they help the weak, the aged and the oppressed. Marduk was said to have

" established the god-fearers, to the oppressed he has brought deliverance;

He has granted favours to the obedient, brought salvation to the just.

Thou liftest up the weak, thou increasest the small;

Thou raisest up the powerless, thou protectest the weak.

Marduk, unto the fallen thou grantest mercy;

Stands under thy protection the weakling ... thou commandest his raising up."

39. Ibid., pp. 102, 103

40. Ibid., p. 106

Marduk heals the sick, drives away demons, and as it is said he raises the dead, namely, those who have no hope of being healed.

" (Marduk son of) the abyss, whose holy formula bestows life;

(Marduk), great magician of the gods who maketh alive the dead;

Terrible storm, which driveth away the great demons;
Lord of magic, before whom devils and demons of sickness hide themselves;

(Lord), who drives out sickness, destroys the mountains;
Prince of the world regions, guardian of life;
Who maketh alive the dead, sole ruler of heaven and earth".⁴¹

The gods forgive sins, and judge people according to their deeds; the gods Shamash, Ishtar, Nusku and Ninib are renowned as judges. From all we have seen, the Assyrian concept of God, although polytheistic, is at the same time monotheistic, in as far as one god is believed to have created the others to whom all the other gods owe allegiance.

3.1,5 CONCLUSION.

Among the religions which we have seen none was able to eliminate the multiplicity of gods within its domain, From the attributes of the various deities, one could say that monotheism was their ultimate end. The gods had unlimited spheres of influence and power, nothing happened without their knowledge, they were generally good to their adherents and were known to be just and merciful.

The Jews came into contact with all these various peoples; they were influenced by their culture and religion but their idea of God as Jahweh, the God and Lord of history, the God of their ancestors who had made them what they were, free men, conquerors of foreign nations and peoples, the God of continuity who had chosen Israel for a special purpose, remained unchanged. The religions we have seen are mere manifestations of their selfawareness, their

41. Ibid., p. 142

dependence on the creator and the deities who serve as his officials. In such a way, the people show their dependence on nature, the work of the gods, organs through which the gods manifest their absolute power; the nature is therefore glorified, at times deified, becomes sacred and eventually symbols of the gods.

As the religions began to be systematized as theologies, and as the political structures gradually became centralized, the idea of one god above all prevailed, a one god who manifests himself through the myriads of gods with different areas of influence, at the same time using such a unification theory to centralize the various cultures and peculiarities of the various regions of the nation. Common among these religions is the effort of the people to please their gods and maintain good relationships with them by offering them sacrifices, building them sanctuaries and temples and singing their praises. In other words, God is seen as a great king, who could be pleased and be moved by gifts, praises, and a mechanical observance of the laws, all done with the aim of material benefits; religion was therefore seen as doing business with God, a profit-orientated investment.

3.2,0 THE JEWISH BIBLICAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD

Generally, experience depends on knowledge, and knowledge is the identification and separation of an object of knowledge from every other object of knowledge. For an object to be identified, perceived and known, it has to exist and be able to prove its existence independent of the perceiver. In other words, an object is not just that which it is believed to be by a subject but what it is in itself; the subject knows exactly what the object is in itself by allowing the object speak for itself. An object of knowledge speaks for itself by revealing itself, making itself manifest.

On the other hand, the human experience of God, who cannot be an object of knowledge but rather the subject, does not follow

the human theory of knowledge. Knowledge of God as we use the word is absolutely impossible. He is unidentifiable and inseparable from all other aspects of knowledge, and is at the same time quite different from every aspect of our knowledge and conception of Him. In spite of that we know that He exists, we acknowledge His existence, in the first place, through our acknowledgement of the existence of the entire nature, which speaks for Him and through which He reveals Himself - natural theology; the whole nature gives testimony to His existence. For an individual or a group, the worth of God does not necessarily lie in the fact that He is the creator of all that exists, but in what He means and what He can do for an individual.

For the majority of the biblical Jews, He is seen as a sort of means to prosperity; since the end is generally more important than the means, one could say that the people valued prosperity more than God Himself, a phenomenon seen among many religious people, a trend which the prophets criticized. The Jewish experience of God until the exodus had been the experience of individuals made known to the group, often in the form of covenants with some individuals on behalf of the entire people. God, who is in all aspects unlimited, unknowable, and unpredictable, is bound by a covenant with a particular people - the chosen race. This very fact underlies the Jewish idea of God and their relationship with Him and other nations. God became manipulable, in other words, He was seen in the same way other peoples saw their gods, namely as a means to material prosperity.

3.2,1 THE PATRIARCHAL EXPERIENCE OF GOD

The Jews identified Jahweh as the God worshiped by their ancestors - Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, a God who was fulfilling in them the promise He had made to their ancestors.

Like the ancient people, the Jewish patriarchs had their personal gods, family gods who were responsible for protecting the various individuals and groups or families a social-religious reality of those days. The idea of personal and family gods started to die down gradually; as the families and clans join together to

form tribes and states, who were replaced by the various national deities and gods (in many cases). It is most likely that these personal or tribal gods were not identified with God, the creator of the whole world.

Abraham experienced God as a personal/family God, a God worshiped perhaps by him alone; a God who ordered him to leave his homeland for another which he and his descendants would inhabit (Gen.12, 1-8). He followed God's instruction and dwelt in the land where God asked him to dwell. His God, the God Almighty, made a covenant with him, promising him multitude of nations; He said:

"Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; and I will make nations of you, and kings shall come forth from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your descendants after you. And I will give to you, and to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; and I will be their God." (Gen. 17, 4-8).

With these words, the fundamentals of Jahwehism, of the state Israel, its political aspirations, ideology and hope have been laid down. A political/religious promise, which gives meaning to history, guides political and religious decisions and aspirations and at the same time sets them apart from every other people (their neighbours) and ties them to one God, obedience to whom is the condition for the fulfillment of the entire promise. God would no longer be the God of Abraham alone but of the entire descendants of Abraham, in other words, the future of Israel is already determined.

Abraham's son Isaac was also upright and worshiped the God of his father Abraham. God asked him not to go and dwell in Egypt; he advised him:

"Sojourn in this land, and I will be with you, and will bless you; for to you and to your descendants I will give all these lands, and I will fulfil the oath which I swore to Abraham your father. I will multiply your descendants as the stars of heaven, and will give to your descendants all these lands; and by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves: because Abraham obeyed my voice and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws". (Gen.26, 3-5)

The promise and covenant made between Abraham and God is extended to Isaac and from Isaac to the whole mankind because Abraham was obedient to the Lord and kept His commandments. With the covenant made with Isaac, the idea of a chosen race was more elaborated and the God of Abraham and Isaac extended His authority over the whole mankind - "by your descendants all the nations of the earth shall bless themselves".

Jacob, the son of Isaac, who became successful through deceit, as his name Jacob indicates, was equally just before God, and the promise made to his fathers were extended to him. God made a covenant with him, promising him among all other things: "Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you" (Gen. 28, 15). Later, God changed his name to Israel and said to him - "Be fruitful and multiply; a nation and a company of nations shall come from you, and kings shall spring from you" (Gen. 35, 11b). These were glorious days, the foundation of Judaism, when God first revealed Himself and His plans were praised by the psalmist (Ps. 105, 5-15). With these, a tradition, ideology and aim were set; we shall later come to see the problems the Jews had in keeping alive these traditions, ideologies and aims.

3.2,2 THE JEWISH EXPERIENCE OF GOD IN CANAAN

With the conquest of Canaan and the establishment of Jewish influence in the whole province, God's revelation in a way came to an end; His mighty deeds, His mercy, His rule over all the gods and authority over foreign nations had been manifested, over and above all His intolerance of idols and of unfaithfulness. Now, the people had to react to His action, He had fulfilled what He had promised to their ancestors; a give and receive action is now expected. God's faithfulness is made vivid, it is now the people's turn to make vivid their faithfulness to Jahweh, their only God. As God's words were accompanied with actions so also must the people's words (faith) be accompanied with actions (obedience); ⁴² this human reaction is the object of the old testament theology, what Israel said directly about Jahweh who had revealed Himself ⁴³ in history and in all works of life.

A people's idea of God is determined and conceived, to a large extent by the problems at hand and the needs of the people; after all, God is a means of overwhelming the problems at hand. The Jews encountered new problems in Canaan, problems common to farmers and settlers, problems which were never traditionally associated with Jahweh, the saving, unlocalized God, who had nothing to do with statues, temples, kings and cult priests. The Canaanite supreme God, El, was identified with Jahweh the God of Israel; since El was a deus otiosus, an inactive god, there was therefore a tendency to regard Jahweh as a resting, inactive God who had completed His works. In order to avoid this logical end, Jahweh was gradually being identified with Baal, the Canaanite active God, responsible for fertility and productivity. Jahweh is El and at the same time Baal. This had to be done in order to protect the Jewish identity and nationality, entailing no worship of foreign gods, no pictures of God and no use of the holy name of

42. Claus Westermann. Theologie des Alten Testaments in Grundzügen. Grundrisse zum AT, Bd.6, Göttingen 1978, p. 23

43. Gerhard von Rad. Theologie des Alten Testaments. Bd.1 München 1978, p. 118

God for profane activities. ⁴⁴

An important social structure of the Jews is their belief that Jahweh controls history and the present. What is said about reality is what is said about God because He reveals Himself in daily occurrences which are controlled by Him, on the other hand what is said about God is what is said about reality. ⁴⁵

The Jews before coming into Canaan had a nomadic tradition and social structure, which not only determined their character but also their religious peculiarity. ⁴⁶ These peculiarities were for them realities, sanctioned by God and their ancestors. Most prominent among the problems they had was how to interact with Jahweh as settlers and at the same time not violating the covenant made between Him and their fathers. To start with, Jahweh had to become a God settling one place - in the land He promised His people, He was no longer a wandering God. His conquest of Canaan and the rescues of the Jews from Egypt made Him great among the gods of these strong neighbours.

In Canaan, the Jews discovered that they were culturally backward, they therefore had to modernize their culture which included their religion, and of course their concept of God, to bring it up to the same level with the culture of the Canaanites. Consequently, the God of Abraham (Gen. 31,53; 26,24; 28,13; 32,10), the God of Isaac (Gen. 28,13; 32,10; 46,1), the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (Ex.3,6,15) called Jahweh, a name most probably given to a pre-Israelite god, ⁴⁷ possibly the god of Jethro, a priest of Midian, who had an altar for this god on Mount Horeb (Ex.3,1-6), became El, the God Most High, a Semitic/Canaanite name for the supreme God, the creator of the earth. ⁴⁸

44. Josef Schreiner. Wort und Botschaft des Alten Testaments. Die Anfänge des Gottesvolkes. Würzburg 1970, p. 69

45. Claus Westermann, a.a.O. p. 8

46. Georg Fohrer. Geschichte der Israelitischen Religion. a.a.O., p. 17

47. Th.C. Vriezen. The Religion of Ancient Israel. London 1967, p. 74

48. Elisabeth Klein. a.a.O. pp. 178-9. (ref. Gen. 14, 19; Melchisedech, the priestly-king of Salem blessed Abraham in the name of El-Eljon, the creator of heaven and earth).

Reclams Bibel Lexikon. hrsg. Klaus Koch u.co. a.a.O., p. 117

Jahweh the God of battles and storms, who, coming into Canaan from Sinai destroyed fields and orchards which El and Baal were meant to protect, gradually started to take interest in the fruits of the earth and was later identified like El as the god of the earth.

Since El is a passive God, who handed over to Baal the worldly and human affairs, a quality which does not suit Jahweh who does not accept another god beside Him, Jahweh therefore had to take over the human and worldly affairs reserved for Baal. He absorbed Baal, took over his functions and became Baal for the Israelites. ⁴⁹ Names like Jerubbaal, Meribaal, Ishbaal etc. indicate the affinity of Jahweh to Baal. According to the prophet Hosea: " And in that day, says the Lord, you will call me, My husband, and no longer will you call me, My Baal. For I will remove the names of the Baals from her mouth, and they shall be mentioned by name no more" (Hos.2,16-17). Jahweh became the God of fertility who blessed people with children (1Sam1.10f; Hos.2,10 etc.); He became a healer and God of life (Hos. 6,1ff; Ex. 15,26) like Baal. Offerings and sacrifices were made to Jahweh on hills and places where the Canaanites used to make sacrifices to their gods (1Sam.9ff; 1Kg.3,4; Hos.9,1; 2 Sam.24, 18 ff) and decorated their altars the same way the Canaanites used to do (Hos.4,13; Jer.2,20; 3,13; Ez.6,12; 20,28; 34,6). Jahweh became the giver of rain (1Kg.18,1) and agricultural bounty (Hos. 2,8; Num. 24,6); He became also the God of the land of Canaan (1Sam,6,9; Hos.9,3), appropriating the high places and the shrines of Baal (Deut.12,2-7; Ez. 20,28). Since there were no mythological stories about God and His relationship with men, myths invented to explain the nature and the principle of causality in Jewish patriarchal tradition, they therefore must have borrowed those found in the Old Testament from their Canaanite neighbours, e.g. the stories of the garden of Eden, the Flood, the killing of the dragon, the tower of Babel, the story of the sons of God who married the daughters of men etc. ⁵⁰

49. Ernst Sellin. Israelitisch-Jüdische Religionsgeschichte. Leipzig 1933, pp. 44, 45

50. Robert H. Pfeiffer. Religion in the Old Testament (A History of Spiritual Triumph) New York 1961, p. 68

Jahweh, the wandering God, has become a settler. The God who refused to reveal His name (Ex.3,14) has been given a name by His ambitious worshippers, the God who was worshiped by the patriarchs at every convenient place, the God who revealed Himself in foreign lands and accompanied the people had been localized in temples, cities, sanctuaries and in the ark of covenant. The Jews tried by all means to interpret their political conquest of Canaan into religious conquest as well by replacing Baal, his altars, forms of sacrifice and statutes with Jahwehs, after all it was Jahweh who conquered the gods of the Canaanite people. There is every indication that the Jews believed in the existence of other gods outside Jahweh (Judg.11,24; 1Sam.26,19; 2Kg.3,27); all efforts were made to make Jahweh appear great or even greater than the gods of their neighbours; there was no longer a place for the type of altar prescribed by Jahweh through Moses, who said: " And if you make me an altar of stone, you shall not build it of hewn stones; for if you wield your tool upon it you profane it" (Ex.20,25). Altars were now majestically built like those of their neighbours (2.Chron.4,1; Ez.43,13-17; 1Kg.7,48), King Ahas even copied directly from Damascus from where he sent to the priest Uriah a model of the altar, its pattern and other details (2.Kg.16, 10ff). King Jeroboam of Israel went as far as making two calves of gold and said to the people - "Behold your gods, O Israel, who brought you out of the land of Egypt"(1Kg.12, 28 b), setting of the gods in Bethel and the other in Dan and the two were worshiped. There were other indications showing that the Jews worshiped other gods beside Jahweh (1Kg.19,18; Hos.13,2; 8,4f; 14,4; 4,17; 11,21; 13,2; Amos 2,8; 4,12; 5,26; 8,14). Of course, one can not necessarily say that the Jews were worshipping idols because these were meant to be representatives of Jahweh who brought them out of Egypt; where idols are categorically worshiped, the idea of Jahweh as Israel's supreme God remains intact.

It is also most likely that the other peoples did not worship the idols they made but like the Jews of the time of the prophet Hosea the power or god represented by the figure. The first commandment and the intolerance of Jahweh of the worship of other gods, His being referred to as a jealous God indicates that there were other

gods beside Jahweh, who were perhaps equally strong, but because of the people's deep experience of Jahweh(among groups and individuals) He became a god who could (according to the laws of conscience and right) not tolerate other gods beside him. A Jew conscious of right and justice could not have another god beside him. This fact led to syncretism, later Henotheism and eventually to monotheism, a process implied in the religions we have already seen e.g. oriental religions. Jahweh became in Canaan a symbol of identity, unity and self-preservation.

3.2,3 THE PROPHETS AND THE PEOPLES EXPERIENCE OF JAHWEH

Prophetic cults were common institutions in the ancient Near East and were often attached to specific sanctuaries, this cult existed even in the pre Israelite Canaan and could be said to be an ancient Jewish religious tradition.⁵¹ Jewish personal experience of Jahweh which went as far back as to Abraham and the other patriarchs of Israel, could also be said to belong to Jewish religious tradition. These two realities are responsible for Jewish identity, monotheism, uniqueness and survival. The prophets bitterly opposed all forms of syncretism⁵² and cultural interdependence considered to be an impediment to the worship of Jahweh and the solidarity of the people. Their main point of argument was the people's experience of Jahweh which had become the history of the people as a group and as individuals. Just as every living person goes about with his experiences and history, so also would every Jew, according to the prophets, keep in him wherever he was this experience of Jahweh - the only saving God of Israel, and be influenced by this experience. This experience formed the basis of his knowledge of reality and behaviour. The prophets were not just appealing for mere worship and sacrifices to Jahweh but for a whole - hearted conversion to Jahweh, which would mean a total submission to His will and service. Prophetism was seen as a charism whereby vocation and deligation from Jahweh to speak His words were the necessary conditions; the prophets understood

51. Ivan Engnell. Critical Essays on the Old Testament. London 1970, p. 43

52. Alfons Deissler. Die Grundbotschaft des Alten Testaments. Freiburg 1981, p. 100

themselves as messengers of God so also did the people. One can say that the prophets were Jahwehistic fundamentalists without necessarily conveying the idea that they were conservatives; fundamentalists in as far as the subject of their sermons and teachings were the history of salvation, tradition and the covenant made to their ancestors. Eventually, these oral traditions were interpreted anew and given meanings quite different from their original meanings and the way their compatriots would interpret them.

They preached conversion, faithfulness, and a continuity of the old tradition. Remarkably, they did not advocate a life which should be chained by the law but one governed by the principle of goodness and justice (Amos 5,14-15; Hos.8,3; Isah.5,20; Mich. 3,2). Jahweh expects goodness and justice from His people (Mich.6,8). The prophets did not advocate ethnicity at the expense of the law and cult but a responsible life before God.⁵³

One of their main concerns was monotheism which they believed was the cornerstone of the covenant and of Jewish identity. According to Elijah, Jahweh the Lord is God (1kg.18,39); for Amos, Jahweh is the Lord and judge of all mankind (1kg.1,2; 9,7); according to Jeremia, foreign gods are mere breath (nothing) (Jer.2,510,15; 16,19); for deuto Isajah, there is no God outside Him (Isah.43,10ff; 45,21ff).

Their main system of teaching was to remind the Israelites of the wonderful things the Lord did for them, how the Lord had remained faithful to His promises and, most spectacular, how He has raised them from the status of slaves in Egypt to rulers of many people in the land of the Canaanites.

Amos reminded the people of the mighty deeds of Jahweh on Israel, namely, the conquest of the tall, strong and warlike Amorites (Amos 2,9), a sign of God's love for Israel (Amos 9,2). Hosea saw the exodus as a sign of God's special love for Israel (Hos.2,17; 11,1; 12,10,14; 13,4).

Isajah described Israel as a vineyard belonging to Jahweh; he spoke of Israel as Jahweh's most precious plant (Isah.5,7).

53. Gerhard von Rad. Theologie des Alten Testaments. Bd.II .
München 1980, pp. 192 - 193

Micha spoke of Israel, the people of God, whom He delivered out of Egypt (Micha 6,1-8). Jeremiah spoke time and again about God's deliverance of the Israelites out of Egypt (Jer.2,6; 7,22,25; 11,4 7; 16,14; 23,7) and gave them a land where they would only have to harvest the already planted fruits (2,7; 7,7). Deutero Isajah reminded the Jews in Babylon (as captives) of the deeds of Jahweh on Noe (Isah.54, 9) His love for Abraham (41,8) and the fathers. He will do the same for those in Babylonian captivity He will deliver them out of Babylon into Zion (43-45; 49; 51; 54; 55). In general, the prophets appealed to the conscience of the people. Common among the prophets was their emphasis on love of God and of the neighbour. To love God, ie., to dedicate oneself to Him, was the beginning of all piety, a self-dedication which implied love of one's neighbour, doing good, and justice. We have already seen what they meant by loving God, having no other hope, master or god beside Him (Isah.7; 31,1-3; Zeph.1,4ff; Jer.7,18; 44,16-25). The prophets spoke against a magic understanding of sacrifice, offerings and worship meant to obtain a favour from God by appeasing God, which would mean: offer a sacrifice to God and then do whatever you like. Among other things they criticised was the tendency of seeing the relationship with Jahweh as a vertical relationship alone, whereby the horizontal relationship between the individuals was neglected. Such attitudes contradicted the real worship of Jahweh and His revelation. 54

Nathan the prophet rebuked David for sending Uriah to the battle-front where he would surely die in order that he could take his beautiful wife Bathsheba. This episode reflects the people's ingratitude to Jahweh and the covenant He made with them; He made them prosperous so that they might be faithful to His words. These facts are illustrated in the words of the Lord through Nathan to the king, David:

"I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you out of the hand of Saul; and I gave you your master's wives into your bosom, and gave you the house of Israel and of Judah; and if this were too little, I would add

to you as much more. Why have you despised the word of the Lord, to do what is evil in his sight?" (2Sam.12,7-9).

As the King Ahab and his wife Jezebel killed Naboth for not allowing the king to make use of his vineyard by accusing him falsely of blasphemy and insinuating the people to stone him, the Lord sent the prophet Elijah to the king with the following words:

"...you have sold yourself to do what is evil in the sight of the Lord. Behold, I will bring evil upon you; I will utterly sweep you away, and will cut off from Ahab every male, bond or free, in Israel" (1Kg. 21,20-21).

Amos made it quite clear to the people of his time how offensive a sacrifice could be to the Lord, more especially when it was made by people who had no sense of justice and righteousness. He once proclaimed to the people in the name of God of Hosts:

"I hate, I despise your feasts, and I take no delight in your solemn assemblies. Even though you offer me your burnt offerings and cereal offerings, I will not accept them, and the peace offerings of your fatted beasts I will not look upon. But let justice roll down like waters, and righteousness like an everflowing stream" (Amos 5,21-24).

Amos sees Jahweh as a God who thinks and cares for the needy (Amos 2,6; 4,1; 5,10,12; 6,12), a God who thinks of the helpless (2,7; 4,1; 5,11; 8,4). For Amos, God detests all forms of injustice committed anywhere by any person including those who serve foreign gods, and threatens to punish all evildoers (1,3 - 2,3).

According to Hosea, the very fact that the people swear, tell lies, kill, steal and commit adultery means that they truly do not have a knowledge of God (Hos. 4,1,2). God does not need sacrifices and offerings but true love and knowledge of Him which surpasses all knowledge (Hos.6,6).

Isaiah bitterly criticises Judah and Jerusalem for their evil ways of life in spite of which they continued making sacrifices to God. The Lord would not accept such sacrifices and offerings. He said:

"What to me is the multitude of your sacrifices ? says the Lord; I have had enough of burnt offerings of rams

and the fat of fed beasts; I do not delight in the blood of bulls, or of lambs, or of he-goats. Bring no more vain offerings; incense is an abomination to me ... I cannot endure iniquity and solemn assembly ... even though you make many prayers, I will not listen; your hands are full of blood ... cease to do evil, learn to do good; seek justice, correct oppression; defend the fatherless, plead for the widow" (Isah.1,11-17) ref.(5,8.23;10,2).

The prophet Micah accuses Israel of iniquities (Micah 3,9-11; 2,1ff, 8ff), for which the Lord would punish the whole people, including the priests who teach for hire and the prophets who divine for money. What God wants is justice, love of kindness and humility (6,8).

Zephaniah criticises the wrongs done by the people and their rulers; the wrongs done by the judges, prophets and priests (Zeph.3,3,4), prophesies Gods favour on all peoples (3,9,10), and the formation of a people loyal to Him, a people humble and lowly, a people who would neither do wrong nor speak evil (3,12,13).

Jeremiah made appeal for justice and truth among the people (Jer.5,1), who had forsaken God, a people who turned their backs against God after when He had made them prosperous (5,7-9); a people who in his words: ... " are full of treachery; therefore they have become great and rich, they have grown fat and sleek. They know no bounds in deeds of wickedness; they judge not with justice ... they do not defend the case of the needy" (5,27-28).

Jeremiah further enumerates the wrongdoings of the people, their wickedness towards one another which knows no bounds (9,1 ff). Such people would suffer in the hands of God, the city would be destroyed and its inhabitants taken into exile (21, 8-10). A warning was issued to the house of Judah to repent and do justice and righteousness " and deliver from the hand of the oppressor him who has been robbed. And do no wrong or violence to the alien, the fatherless, and the widow, nor shed innocent blood in this

place", in order to enjoy prosperity and for kings to sit on the throne of David; otherwise they would face destruction (21,11; 22,3-5). Jeremiah condemned sacrifices made in sin, or made in order to put away the mind of God from their social injustice (7,9ff). God does not need sacrifice and offerings in order to save His people.

"For the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, I did not speak to your fathers or command them concerning burnt offerings and sacrifices. But this command I gave them, obey my voice, and I will be your God, and you shall be my people; and walk in all the way that I command you, that it may be well with you" (7,21-23).

These could be summed up as the climax of the prophetic teachings and theology; doing the will of God is the highest sacrifice; His will comprises of social justice and freedom for all (34, 8-22). Among the other prophets, Ezechiel condemned the oppression common in the land and the bloodshed (Ezk.22,6-10). Tristo Isaiah condemned fasting which neglects social justice and love; such fasting as he said would not be acceptable to the Lord. The fasting which the Lord required comprised of justice and love, putting an end to the wickedness in the land, ending the oppression of the weak, feeding the hungry, housing the homeless etc. (Isah. 58, 1-12). The Lord spoke through the prophet Zechariah telling the people what He expected from them, namely, love, mercy and justice, and the end of all sorts of oppression and evil against one another. Since the people did not listen to God's admonition, they were scattered by the Lord to all the nations they had not known (Zech, 7,9-14). Malachi describes the covenant with Levi as the covenant of life and peace made on the condition that Levi fears and respects the name of the Lord, a covenant which holds for his offsprings as long as they remain faithful to God and to one another; a covenant which Malachi refers to as a marriage (Mala.2,5,10,14,15).

With the end of the patriarchal period where the nomadic and social structure of the Jews made it possible to identify a clan father through whom God could communicate to the people; prophecy, common to people of those days, became an alternative way through

which God could reveal His intention and disposition.

It eventually became the most important institution in ancient Israel, ⁵⁵ separating the Jewish religion from those of their neighbours by urging the people to be faithful to the word of Jahweh which determined the past, the hope of the present and the future. Jahweh is the God of the totality of human experience, a God whose ways and truth exist in revelatory identity; the old truth and ways made known to the ancestors, a God whose present words through the prophets falls in line with the words spoken to the ancestors. In other words, the later experience of Him does not suppress the earlier experience of Him but makes Him the God of the past, the present and the future. ⁵⁶

Aware of the fact that the religious cults of their time were foreign to Jahweh, they did not want them abolished, but demanded the true cult, justice, obedience and love. ⁵⁷

3.2,⁴ THEOLOGY OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

In every religion, man's revelation of himself to God follows God's revelation of Himself through the works of His hands of which man is one. That means man's consciousness of himself implies the existence of a being we call God. Man interacts with Him as a being to whom one owes one's existence. In the case of the Jews He made a covenant with men, whereby God's actions and the response of the people with whom He made the covenant remained constant and determinable. It was this give and take idea that governed God's relationship with His people according to the bible, a concept or belief seen also in the other religions of the old. The covenant is the centre of the Jewish relationship with God and their theology. God is known for His faithfulness, and at the same time He is seen as a free, active, moral and perfect ethical personality. ⁵⁸

55. Robert H. Pfeiffer. Religion in the O.T., NY, 1961, p.83

56. Douglas A. Knight. Tradition and Theology in the Old Testament London 1977, p. 314

57. Ivan Engnell. Critical Essays on the O.T., a.a.O., p. 45

58. A.B. Davidson. The Theology of the O.T., Edinburgh 1911, p.115

Jahweh was a god among many other gods and therefore had a personal name and was conceived of as an individual. He is at times seen as a 'glory', meaning light or flame (Ex.24, 16-17; 1kg. 8,11; Is. 6,3), at times covered by a cloud or smoke or riding upon a cloud (Is. 19,1; Ps. 18,8-12; 2Sam.22,9-13). He could be seen in visions (Is.6,1), assumed human form (Gen.3, 8-21; 18,1), He is imagined in human form (Gen.1,27; Is.30, 27-28). In general, God spoke by means of dreams and often through angels, His messengers.

In spite of the fact that Jahweh became, through Jewish contact with the Canaanite and Egyptian culture, a god of nature like Baal, He is primarily known as the God of society and history. He is called the Lord, the King, the Judge, the Shepherd, the Father, the Husband etc. of the people. He is the sole administrator of society and history and has no need for a representative nor can His person be reduced to a common factor in the form of a picture nor can He be represented by another god or human person. The experience of Him is overwhelming, it is exciting and devastating (Jer. 15,16; 20, 8b-9). His love for mankind and the reason for it are unconceivable. The Psalmist puts it in this way - " What is man that You are mindful of him, and the son of man that You care for him ? Yet You have made him little less than divine, and crown him with glory and honour " (Ps. 8,5). Equally unconceivable is the close attention He gives to mankind " testing him every single moment " (Job. 7, 17-18). Even for the patriarchs, God was evasive. Although they felt His presence but could not say exactly His name or what He looked like. Moses asked Him His name and He answered Moses saying - I am what I am, indicating the fact that God could only be understood on His own terms; no concept can contain His nature. He is a God who will be gracious to whom He will be gracious and show mercy to whom He would show mercy, in other words, He is what He is. Nevertheless, this undefinable and unlimited God limits Himself by making a covenant with mankind, a covenant made on the basis of give and take action. The infinite God makes Himself finite for the sake of mankind. ⁵⁹

59. Jonathan Magonet. Concept of God in the Hebrew Bible. in
The Month.Jan.1984 London. p. 9

A factor that makes Him a God above all gods and mankind is the inconsistency in His character,⁶⁰ He is not determinable. He is conceived as a man but never fully manifested as a man, righteous but not absolutely righteous, for He defends Israel even when she is wrong (Gen. 20). At times His anger destroys the innocent and the guilty (2 Sam.21; 24; 1 Sam.6,19-20; 2 Sam.6, 6-7). He ordered Moses to send away Hagar and Ishmael (Gen. 21,12), but saved them from death in the desert (21,17-20). He induces men to sin and then punishes them (2Sam.24) just as He hardened the heart of Pharaoh in order to punish him. Jahweh punishes those who violate His holiness (2Sam.6,6-7; Lev. 10,1-2; 16,2; Num. 16,31-35) and at times attacks His worshippers without any reason (Gen.32,24-30; Ex. 4,24). Jahweh can send a spirit that causes insanity (1Sam.16, 14; 19, 9-10) and a spirit that enables men to do great deeds (Judg.6,34; 11,29; 14,6; 15,4; 1Sam,11,6-11); a spirit of false prophecy (1 Kg.22,19-23) and a spirit of true prophecy (1Sam.10, 10; Ezek.3,24); a spirit of perverseness (Is. 19,14) and a spirit of wisdom (Ex.28,3; 31,3; Is. 11,2). These concepts of Him show him as the Lord of all things, evil and good but different from every other god and mankind and therefore called Holy, separated from all other things (Hos. 11,9; Is.28,21,29; 29,14). He is neither a god like other gods nor a man like every other man. What He actually is remains unknown. God's holiness is the central point of the Old Testament faith in God and the people's concept of God; a God whose uniqueness tolerates no other being; there is no one like Him and no one who could understand His mind and ways. His intolerance of the worship of other Gods or of people who equate any being or god to Him makes people speak of His jealousy. Jahweh's jealousy stands behind the ten commandments (Ex.20; Dt.5) and the theoretical development of Monotheism.⁶¹

The very fact that He is holy means He transcends human affairs and nature but the very fact that He is a jealous God means that He is interested in human affairs and actions. He is not indifferent to human life but intervenes in love, grace and mercy.⁶²

60. Robert Pfeiffer. Religion in the O.T. a.a.O., p. 76 f

61. Th.C.Vriezen. Theologie des Alten Testaments. a.a.O., p.128

62. Ibid., p. 137

The bible is therefore a history of salvation and at the same time the history of God's intervention in human affairs.

The history of the Exodus accounts for the fundamental intervention of God in world affairs as far as the Jews were concerned. The God who had rescued a depressed, enslaved and powerless people must have had a reason for doing so; He must have had a reason for delivering the rich land of Canaan to them. Thus a theology, a political entity and consciousness came to existence. The Jews began to see themselves as a chosen race, unique and separated just like Jahweh; a holy people set aside for the Lord; a nation ruled by God Himself. ⁶³

Later around 621 B.C., king Josiah centralized the Jahwehistic cult and cleaned Judaism of idol worship (2kg. 23), and thereby strengthened monotheism while centralising the worship of Jahweh in Jerusalem. A move which indicated that the worship of Jahweh was at first decentralised and with regards to (Dt.6,4) "Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God is one Lord ..." one could say that most probably the worship of Jahweh in various places might have implied the existence of many Jahwehs, as it is the case with Baal and the gods of their neighbouring states. The prophets as we have already seen warned the people against their evil ways which would lead to the destruction of Jerusalem and the exile of the people into foreign lands. Jahweh then, is not only a jealous God but a God who loves justice, mercy and kindness. The very fact that the words of the prophets were later fulfilled, Jerusalem destroyed and the people carried into exile made the people aware of their persistent disobedience and cleared the way for monotheism. In this case, national disaster made way for comprehensive understanding of monotheism and its establishment. One could therefore say that Jewish monotheism, with regards to God's faithfulness and the people's disobedience in return, coupled by some national disasters, was born out of a moral interpretation of history and of the faithfulness of Jahweh. ⁶⁴

63. G.Ernest Wright. God Who Acts. Biblical Theology as Recital
London 1966, pp. 50 ff

64. Millar Burrows. An Outline of Biblical Theology.
a.a.O., pp. 58, 59

History plays a lot of role in the Jewish response to the wonderful deeds of Jahweh, deeds which were later on fully appreciated and identified as a continuation of the covenant He had made with their fathers and led to a comprehension of both present and future. In view of this, one can therefore say that the old testament theology is in the first place a confessional recital whereby history is seen as a problem of faith.⁶⁵ Moreover, God's self-revelation in history is for the prophets not merely a past incident but a reality which determines the future, a reality whose fulfilment and comprehension lies in the future.⁶⁶

Theology in the Old Testament consists of the actions and reactions between God and man and interaction whereby man responds with prayers, offerings, sacrifices, praise, doubt, annoyance etc. God acts and speaks so that He would receive an answer consisting of speaking and acting.⁶⁷ The centre of Old Testament theology is God's self-revelation in words and actions.⁶⁸

These stories must be told to the future generations (Ps.44,2; 78,3; Dt. 6,7; 29,22ff), deeds which are meant for all peoples and generations (Ps.96,3; Is. 43,21) so that they would come to worship Jahweh. Man's answer to God's words and actions through his acts, words and thoughts comprises the entire beingness of man, a relationship between God and all that is in man; a confrontation which is unavoidable.⁶⁹

After all, man is made in His image and likeness, an important fact in OT which forms the climax of Old Testament theology and anthropology.⁷⁰

65. G.Ernest Wright. God Who Acts., a.a.O.,p. 58

66. Wolfhart Pannenberg. Offenbarung als Geschichte. Göttingen 1982, p.44

67. Claus Westermann. Theologie des Alten Testaments. a.a.O., p.134

68. Gerhard von Rad. Theologie des Alten Testaments. a.a.O., p. 128

69. Claus Westermann. a.a.O., p. 181

70. Thorleif Boman. Das Hebräische Denken im Vergleich mit dem Griechischen. Göttingen 1954, p. 95

Having seen the structures of the most prominent religions of the ancient Near East including Judaism, their tendency towards a henotheistic belief and practice, their various and peculiar paths towards monotheism, ⁷¹ kingship and the belief on a theocratic political reality, one might say that Israel was in the religious environment of the ancient Near East a (qados), set apart, but not a (nikrat), cut off. ⁷² Even the names the Jews (late comers in the religious-cultural scene of the Near East) gave their God were identical to the names given to God by their neighbours, differing in content and meaning, showing the differences in history, experience and tradition. Just as Jahweh was for the Jews an incomparable God so also were the gods of many of their neighbours to their worshippers, ⁷³ and the strength of the gods are reflected in the military, political and cultural success of the adherents. The gods of the ancient Near East created like Jahweh through the words of their mouth which were powerful and through whom all that was came to be. Marduk's word tore the heavens, shook the earth and was a storm which destroyed all things; Amon-Re created all that is, from whose mouth the gods came into being; Jahweh's word was like fire, a hammer which broke rocks (Jer.23,29) ⁷⁴. The strength of the words of Jahweh is illustrated in the following by the prophet Isaiah:

"For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven,
and return not thither but water the earth, making
it bring forth and sprout, giving seed to the sower
and bread to the eater, so shall my word be that goes
forth from my mouth; it shall not return to me empty,
but it shall accomplish that which I purpose, and prosper
in the thing for which I sent it" (Is.55, 10-11).

71. Millar Burrows. An Outline of Biblical Theology. a.a.O., p.59

72. Norman C. Habel. Jahweh versus Baal. New York 1964, p. 115

73. C.J. Labuschagne. The Incomparability of Jahweh in the Old Testament. Leiden 1966, p. 31

74. Thorleif Boman. Das Hebräische Denken im Vergleich mit dem Griechischen. a.a.O., pp. 45-47

Jahweh's word and their irrevocability gave strength to the covenant and formed the basis of prophetic teachings and eschatology. On this account, the prophets of Israel and Judah did not bring any new teaching but were rather strong believers in the spoken words of Jahweh and the covenant He made with their ancestors. They preached what the people already knew and urged the people to have faith in the words of Jahweh.⁷⁵ Being faithful to Jahweh meant doing away with all falsehood, evil doings and idolatry; to be holy, unadulterated and faithful like Jahweh. Their aim was to establish a kingdom of God on earth, a union with God through conversion of heart. A kingdom administered by God through the king and rulers, a kingdom on earth which reflected God's will.⁷⁶ While trying to build a kingdom of God on earth, the Jews later found that the existing kingdoms of their neighbours were indispensable means of comparison and imitation. Jahweh the Mosaic tribal god became a national god and was fused with the Jerusalemite sky god - el eloyon, the creator god, the god of judgement and of fate. For the prophets, he became the Jerusalemite El-Jahweh, the god who has his seat in Jerusalem, where he could be worshiped. Later the people like their neighbours adopted the cult of a sacral kingship. He was referred to as the son of God (Ps.2,7) and as a divine being (Ps.45,7), like the kings of other lands. He was anointed to rule, judge and promulgate laws; he embodied within himself the whole people and he was responsible for prosperity, victory and well-being of the people. The people later came to identify the office of a sacral kingship with that of a saviour (Judg.3,9;15; Neh.9,27; 1Sam.9,16; 11,3 ff; 2Sam3,8) Messiah, or the anointed king.⁷⁷

It is obvious that the Jews modelled their religion and cult in line with those of their neighbours; after all, Jahweh is also the king of other peoples (Am.9,7; Jer.10,7); He rules over them (Is.44,24-28; 45,1-6), they belong to His universal kingdom

75. Th.C.Vriezen. *Theologie des Alten Testaments in Grundzügen*. Neukirchen Kreis Moers 1956, p.150

76. Georg Fohrer. *Geschichte der Israel-Religion* a.a.O.,p.276

77. Ivan Engnell. *Critical Essays on the O.T.* a.a.O., pp. 40-42

(Dn.2,44; 7,13) and to the kingdom of the Messiah (Ps.2,8) and are Jahweh's property (Am.9,12). The very fact that Jeremiah prophesized against foreign nations (Jer.46 ff), Jahweh called a foreign king, Cyrus, his anointed, who would carry out His wishes (Is. 45), Ezekiel as well spoke against Tyre (Ez. 27) and against Egypt (29) and delivered the Israelites out of Egypt, means that Jahweh had power and authority over these people (all peoples) and their gods. Jahweh was not only the God of the gods, not only a *primus inter pares* but the only one God worshipped indirectly by the people to whom He did not reveal Himself directly.

Religion arose out of a consciousness of need and a feeling that there was a power to meet that need, there is only one power who could meet all human needs, including freedom from gods who oppress man through their incessant demands of sacrifices, and offerings as means of salvation; and this power is God, who does not need any thing from man other than justice and love for all including Himself.

From every indication, all the religions which we have so far seen have an eudamonistic tendency and background. Good is done; man worshiped and obeyed God in order to be rewarded with good while on earth. The promises made in the OT had material reward as a result of obedience to Jahweh (Dt. 5, 16). After all, God is a living God, who acts in human history, whose love manifests itself in material prosperity; God's blessing is inseparable from material welfare (Job 42) ⁷⁸. In other words, the ultimate aim of these religions, quite like African/Nigerian traditional religion, is an abundance of life; God is seen as a means to this abundance of life, which unfortunately is often located outside God. In many cases God is forgotten as soon as these needs are met, a phenomenon seen also in Christianity. Obedience to the law is a guarantee for Gods blessing; (Dt. 28, 1 f; Prov.14,34; 10,27" Ps. 37,25). Man's joys and sorrows are

78. Th.C.Vriezen. Theologie des Alten Testaments in Grundzügen
a.a.O., pp. 16 Of, 294

believed to be the merit of one's actions. One's state of life is meritorious; one reaps what one sows. ⁷⁹

An important character of the OT which identifies it from every other religion is the Portrait of God as a tragic hero, who attempts to obtain the loyalty and love of His people but ends in disappointment and cries for repentance and reconciliation with the people. ⁸⁰ We shall soon come to see how this message was carried over into the New Testament. One important characteristic of the OT, which distinguishes it from every other religion, is its insistence on a direct relationship between God and man, a relationship which makes the gods and their intermediary roles irrelevant. God does not need human sacrifice and offerings but a change of heart; He demands obedience to His will and a union of will with Him and a life dedicated to humanity, so that man may be more human and not like Adam, Eve and the bad angels in heaven who through selfish motives wanted to be like God and not like a man who worships an idol or a created object like himself or even the works of his own hands. Man as an image of God has not only to resemble God but has to long for a union of will with him.

In the course of time, the word of God became man, the son of God himself took human flesh to show mankind what God His father demanded from mankind, thus saving mankind from falsehood by showing mankind the way to His father, the fullness of life, in whose name He came so that mankind might have life, and have it abundantly (Joh.10,10). Christ became therefore for all mankind, the way of life, the life itself and the means to the fulness of life which Nigerians more especially members of the Nigerian traditional religion, have been seeking. Christ did not present himself as a God but as the way, as a man like every other man but different in that he united his will with that of God, thus did not sin. He freely gave himself up as an instrument in the hands of God.

We shall now see how he tried to make this fact clear to mankind, how he became the way of life, the light for those in the darkness and a symbol of unity for all mankind and religions.

79. Ulrich Wilckens. Auferstehung. Stuttgart 1977, p. 78 f

80. Jonathan Magonet. Concept of God in the Hebrew Bible
a.a.O., p. 9

CHAPTER FOUR

JESUS AND HIS APOSTLES (IN ST. MARKS GOSPEL)

4.1,0

INTRODUCTION

In our opinion, the Old Testament, i.e. the history of God's relationship with man, in particularly with the Jews before the birth of Christ, had a tragic and disappointing end because man saw God as an instrument in his hands with whom he could achieve his ends. God was practically something external to man, a being and person with whom one could make a deal or contract, a being whom he should worship in order to win his favour. Man saw God as a personal or group property obliged to the group's aspirations and interest, often forgetting that God wants obedience and not sacrifice and that even the devil can quote the bible to suit his own purpose. With such a concept of God, mankind would find it practically impossible to experience the kingdom of God longed for by the prophets; instead, mankind would see a kingdom of man where human vices and aspirations are the order of the day. In order to save the human race from this self-destruction, the word of God took flesh and dwelt among men.

The New Testament, i.e. the history of the life of Christ or the history of human salvation, was a reversal of the popular trend in the OT and in other ancient religions, including the African/Nigerian traditional religion, namely, using God as a means to an end or as an instrument who serves human personal or group interests. In contrary to the people of the old, Christ saw himself as a man who was there to do the will of God; he saw himself as an instrument in God's hand and a means of furthering God's interests. He revealed through his life and works what exactly God's will and interest is which of course aims at a maximum human welfare.

Just as God his father, Jesus had to choose certain people with whom he had to start this new way, men to whom he had to reveal himself, show his Godly and human identity, men who he had

to teach to subject their private interests to God's will. We shall be seeing in this chapter how far he succeeded in teaching his followers (disciples) who had to teach other people to dedicate themselves as instruments in God's hands, to seek always the will of God.

THE GOSPEL OF ST. MARK

St. Mark's gospel is the oldest among the canonical gospels, written around 70 A.D. most probably in Rome by John Mark, the Jerusalem Jewish Christian (Acts 12,12), the companion of Paul (Acts 13,5,13; Col.4,10; Phlm.24) and a student of St. Peter (1 Petr.5,13), who most probably wrote his gospel for the converted pagans. The gospel must have been written shortly after the death of Peter in order to make sure that the oral tradition on the life and works of Christ would be preserved.¹ The gospel was presented as a sort of historical account of human salvation and at the same time pointing to the readers of the gospel which way leads to salvation. It described how Jesus went about it, seen by many but remained among them unidentified. Mark centered his gospel on the cross and resurrection of Christ, starting from his baptism in Jordan till his resurrection. His main intention of writing was to spread the teachings and life of Christ to newly converted Christians.² Mark made effort to show the significance of the death of Christ (now a historical fact) to the Christians and thereby makes the death of Christ the middle point of his gospel narrative to which every other incident pointed. He wanted to show his readers why Jesus had to die (Mk.3.6;8.31;9,31; 10,33), a man whose way is death itself. The mystery of his life was only unveiled after his death by the Roman centurion, (15, 39) who summed up the whole mystery, irony and narration of the gospel - as if he would say, " this man of whom I have spoken is the only son of God who dwelt unidentified among us".

For Mark, the apostles with whom he lived, worked, ate and drank never comprehended his person and message until after his resurrection.

1. Joachim Gnilka. Das Evangelium nach Markus. Zürich 1978,p.34f

2. Ibid., p. 25

Their ignorance of him contributed also to his death,³ they believed in him without understanding him. According to Mark, community with Christ is only possible for those who are ready to carry with him his cross and sufferings (Mk.8,34-38).⁴ The gospel shows the Jews as an unbelieving race who led Christ to death (11,27-12,12; 14,64; 15,11-15) and whose temple cult and laws concerning food were abolished by Christ (7,19; 11,12-19; 13,2; 14,58; 15,29).

4.1,1 THE VOCATION OF ST. PETER

The relationship between Jesus and his apostles can best be illustrated in a review of his relationship with Peter, one of the three intimate followers of Jesus and who in many cases spoke on behalf of the other apostles. We shall therefore be reviewing him as typical of the apostles of Jesus, and as one whom Jesus had as arch-apostle and representative of the others.

St. Mark begins his gospel with the baptism of Christ, introducing Christ as the son of God and the representative of God among mankind (Mk.1,10-11). A man like every other man but, quite unlike every other man, he did not sin (1,12-13). Mark later introduced the four apostles, the two brothers Simon and Andrew, and another two brothers James and John, indicating that they were at the very beginning with Jesus (1,16-20), even before his first miracle and preaching outside Galilee. They bore witness to all he did and said (Acts 1,21-22) in order that they could bear him witness among all nations of the world.⁵ We were told that the four were busy fishing when they were called by Jesus. They left their old tools, property and relatives and followed him unconditionally; they abandoned their old interests and means of livelihood with the aim of a higher material reward (Mk.10,28-31). Although they followed Jesus without any precondition indicating that discipleship implied repentance

3. Ibid., p. 27

4. Reclams Bibel Lexikon a.a.O., p. 320

5. Rudolf Schnackenburg. Das Evangelium nach Markus.

Düsseldorf 1971, p. 35

and faith, as Mark wanted his readers to understand;⁶ but the ulterior motive behind the repentance and faith were not said. According to Matthew's gospel, the four were told that they would no longer be fishers but fishers of men (Mt.4,19f); so their duty is defined. Formerly, they used to catch fish for their own welfare, but from then on they had to recruit men into the kingdom of God and thereby serving God's interest and will alone. In (Gen.17,3-8) Abraham was promised many children, " ... but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations " a race to whom He will be a God. Abraham had also to fish men for the kingdom of God just like Peter and the other apostles. The two had faith in the person that called them to the new way of life; they left all things and went into the uncertainty with only repentance and faith.

The very fact that the apostles accepted his invitation without further deliberation means that they may have sometime thought of being his disciples and must have longed for the day on which he would give them a formal invitation (Mk.10,28; Lk.14,28-33).⁷ Certainly, Jesus chose his apostles to be not only his companions but men to whom he could reveal his identity, namely, his Godly and human nature,⁸ which took them no time to verify.

According to Mark, Jesus went into the synagogue in Capernaum where he cast out an unclean spirit from a man, an unclean spirit or devil who, the moment he saw Jesus, recognized him as the Holy One of God. Jesus in spite of the open confession, cast him out from the man. The reaction of those present in the Synagogue must have registered in the minds of the apostles, "What is this? A new teaching! With authority he commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey him", said the people. So everybody asked who is this man. St.Mark must have purposely prepared for this astonishment both in his narration and in the minds of readers hearing for the first time about

6. Joachim Gnilka. Das Evangelium n.Markus I,Zürich 1978, p.75

7. Josef Schmid. Das Evangelium n.Markus II,Regensburg 1954,p.40

8. Edward Schweizer. Das Evangelium n.Markus, Göttingen 1967,p.44

Jesus by not saying any thing about the genealogy of Christ or even from which town he came. For Mark the story is about Jesus Christ, the Son of God (1,1) thereby indicating his descent and identity.

Mark shows how much Jesus was concerned with the private affairs of his disciples by bringing in the curing of the mother-in-law of Peter (1,29-31). The apostles were witness to the healings and other wonders he did, the many people who ran after him seeking him and the many he healed, a deed which was unheard of in all of Israel, but none cared to know exactly who he was, instead, he encountered the arrogance of the leaders of the people who saw him as a rival. To the mystery of his person and the works he did which only God could do, the people replied "We never saw anything like this"!, in other words, they asked, "who could this man be?"

Jesus selected his followers from the people and most probably from those who came to him for help or advice.⁹ According to the list in (3,16-19), Simon was renamed Peter, rock, indicating the role he had to play. In other words, he had been told how and what he should be, what Jesus master expected from him and it was then left to him to meet up to this expectation. He was to be a new man, a strong man on whom others (the church) could rely.¹⁰ The new name indicated the new alliance he had entered with Jesus and with every other person that could come to believe in him (Xt). Matthew and Luke also put the name of Peter before that of the other apostles (Mk.3,16; Mt.10,2; Lk, 6,14). It would be as if Mark had wanted to say, " the man who Jesus chose before choosing the other apostles, the man in whose house he spent a night (Jesus first visit to a private house, according to St.Mark), the speaker for the four most important apostles(1,16-38), this is the man whom he renamed - Peter" (3,16), the rock and fortress of the other apostles. Peter was not called a rock with reference to Jesus;

9. Clemens Stock. *Boten aus dem mit-ihm-Sein*. Roma 1978, p.11

10. Oscar Cullmann. *Petrus Jünger-Apostel-Märtyrer*.

Stuttgart 1960, p. 23

surely Jesus did not need such a human fortress but a fortress for the others; one who should strengthen the faith of the others; one who would stand when every other person had fallen. Just as Abram was renamed Abraham, to indicate his new responsibility, namely, to be the father of many, not only through genealogical relationship but through the faith and belief in Jahweh which he would spread to all peoples of the world; so also was Peter destined to be the fortress of many, not only for the disciples of Christ but for all who might come to believe in Christ.

The importance and significance for Mark of the renaming of Simon is illustrated by the fact that he never again after (3,16) called Peter, Simon or Simon Peter as was the case with other evangelists except on only one occasion (Mk.14,37), during Christ's agony in the garden of Gethsemane. Here Peter was called Simon, indicating that he had betrayed his responsibility and name by not keeping awake in time of great danger.

4.1,2

JESUS' REVELATION OF HIS GODLY POWER (MK. 5,21-43)

Just as in the Old Testament, where God revealed Himself through the works and deeds of His hands. He delivered the Israelites from slavery, from the hands of the Pharaoh and his army, a mighty deed which no power on earth at that time could have been able to perform. The proud and strong army of the Egyptians suffered defeat at the hands of weak, militarily unskilled slaves; more still this same group defeated the civilized Canaanites and took over their land. These deeds are meant to show that Jahweh is among and behind the Israelites.

Mark introduced another incident in which Jesus called Peter, James and John (5,21-43) from the crowd, to reveal his identity which was up till then hidden from the crowd. By so doing, Mark makes clear Jesus' attitude towards the unbelievers (v.35-36), the crowd whom he left outside, and towards the most trusted believers (37) the three apostles, whom he took inside Jairus' house. ¹¹

11. Edward Schweizer. Das Evangelium nach Markus. a.a.O., p.65

In narrating the story of the healing of the daughter of Jairus, Mark brought in first the healing of the woman who had a flow of blood for twelve years, to show that Jesus was the saviour of all who believed in him even when all hope was lost.¹² The apostles must have followed these incidents to see that Jesus demanded from his hearers only one thing, namely, faith in him, and this faith was capable of doing wonders, so he was not a magician nor had he magical power which was common in those days but rather he worked by virtue of the trust the hearers invested in him.¹³

Jesus said to the woman who had a flow of blood, healed after she had touched his clothes - "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace, and be healed of your disease", and to Jairus, "Do not fear, only believe", incidents which were supposed to teach the listeners that faith in Jesus makes one well and drives away fear (Vs. 34.36), an important message to all.

In the story of the healing of Jairus' daughter, Mark brought in the faith of a sick woman who might not have had much to do with Jesus and that of a ruler of the Synagogue, a healthy influential man. With the sick woman her faith made her well; with Jairus, his faith removed fear from him. Before this incident, Mark had only narrated the disbelief of the people who in one way or the other had encountered Jesus. In (3,6) the Pharisees and the Herodians made plans to kill him because he did a good deed on sabbath; that was the reward for his healing a man with a withered hand. For the man of God, the Pharisees and the rulers of the people, Jesus was an evil man, but for the devil, the so-called enemy of God of the people of God, he was the Son of God (1,24;3,11). Even the Scribes said of him - "he is possessed by Beelzebul, and by the prince of demons he casts out the demons" (3,22,30). And the very fact that his mother and his brothers came to him when they heard that he was beside himself perhaps to take him home (3,21) out of brotherly love, further suggests that he was never understood by any one nor

12. Walter Schmithals. Das Evangelium nach Markus. Gerd Mohn
1979, p. 283

13. Joachim Gnilka. Das Evangelium nach Markus, I, a.a.O., p.213

was there any one who had faith in him as he deserved it. In (3,13) he rebuked the apostles for not understanding a simple parable. While he was in the boat with his disciples, a great storm arose and Jesus was asleep; they became afraid and woke him up saying to him - "Teacher, do you not care if we perish? After calming the sea, he said to them "Why are you afraid? Have you no faith? With this Mark has succeeded in showing that in contrast to Jairus who did not enjoy as much close contact with Jesus as the disciples had but was not afraid because he had faith in Jesus, the disciples had shown that all the close contact they had had with Jesus had been almost in vain. They were afraid because they had no strong faith in him who had power over nature and whose presence was enough to calm nature. If they could have thought what it meant for the Son of God to drown, an impossibility, they could have therefore had the courage to share this fate with him, an incident which repeated itself during the arrest of Jesus. Mark used this story to warn his readers against a weak faith.¹⁴ The faith of the woman was so strong that she believed that even the garments of Jesus could even heal, and that of Jairus was so strong that he had faith in Jesus even when he heard that his daughter had already died; faith makes that which is humanly impossible possible.

Jesus took with him into Jairus' house three of the four disciples who were at the very beginning with him, the ones he first called (1,16-20), witnesses of his first miracle (1,21-31) and named first among the twelve (3,16f) who were now to become eye-witnesses to his greatest deed, raising a dead child to life. God created man by mere words (Gen.1ff); in the same way did Christ raise up the dead child through mere words, he said: "Little girl, I say to you, arise", the word of Jesus itself is life, faith in Jesus knows no fear of death, it saves and leads to life. The three had to know him as one who had power over the devil (1,23-27), over disease (1,30-45), over the sea (4,35-41) and over death (5,40-43).

14. Joachim Gnifka. Das Evangelium nach Markus. e.a.O., pp.196, 197

Jesus revealed himself to them as the One from God, for no ordinary man could do all that he did. Jesus must have made this revelation to them to strengthen their faith in him, so that they would strengthen the faith of the rest. As usual, he instructed them to keep the healing secret, and this must have been one of the reasons why he took only a few of his followers with him. His person had to remain concealed so that the people would not out of enthusiasm debar him from doing the will of his father.

The fact that Jesus took only the three into Jairus' house seemed normal to the other disciples since they did not protest after the healing (9,1f) as they had when the two sons of Zebedee asked Jesus to seat them on his right and on his left in his kingdom (10,35-41), instead they quietly followed him into his own country. The power of Jesus was then clear to the three, he was the lord over life and death, a man over whom death had no power, thus preparing them for his arrest and death.

4.1,3 THE CONFESSION OF ST. PETER (Mk. 8, 27-38)

After all the works of Christ which the disciples themselves had witnessed, he questioned them to find out the impression they had of him, in other words the result of all his works and teachings. Like a good teacher, he had to examine his students to find out if they had been following or not. He also had to take the opportunity to correct ideas of him.

Jesus asked the disciples - " Who do men say that I am? And they told him, John the Baptist; and others say, Elijah; and others, one of the prophets" (8, 27b-28). The question " who do men say that I am? implies that Jesus must have left his identity open to human phantasy and speculation, away of the contradicting opinions the people had of him, suggesting that he might have purposely induced the people to guess who he was.

Thus he purposely spoke to the people in parables, so that "they might indeed see but not perceive, and might indeed hear but not

understand"; but he spoke in clear words to the disciples, for to them, he said, "has been given the secret of the kingdom of God" (4,11-12, 33-34). So he did not expect the people to say exactly who he was because he did not speak in clear words to them. Jesus may not have been surprised that they thought him to be one of the reincarnated historical Jewish figures. Their guess gives one the impression that Jesus might have been in line with the teaching of the old, of Moses and the prophets; he could therefore not have been a revolutionary figure or a teacher of new doctrines. Their ideas of him suggest that the majority of people held him as a man of God, in other words had a positive impression of him but in their opinion he did not merit the title of the expected Messiah and therefore could not be the Messiah, for they had another picture of the Messiah (Joh.7,27) - a king with political ambition ¹⁵ and not one who would preach like a prophet. The answer to the question he asked gave the disciples the time and opportunity to make up their mind about who he was, they could not just say what others thought of him without taking him for someone. The first question therefore introduced the second. ¹⁶

To his second question - "But who do you say that I am?" Peter without hesitation answered - "You are the Christ" (8,29-30). The direct question to the disciples could be embarrassing after their having been with him for so long; still, he asks them whom they think he is. Peter of course had to answer quickly for the others before someone could say something unreasonable. His answer: "you are the Christ;" implies no doubt but a strong conviction which though under normal circumstances be taken as blasphemy (14,61-64), could be regarded as the result of all his experience of Jesus. Peter is the first human being who has recognized him as the Christ; before him were only the voice from heaven, which called him his beloved son (1,11), and the devil who identified him by the mere sight of him (1,24; 3,11; 5,7). That would mean that among all men he encountered, Peter could be regarded as the most elevated, a man who knew what only God and the

15. Josef Schmid. Das Evangelium n. Markus II, Regensburg 1954, p.154 f

16. Ernst Lohmeyer. Das Evangelium des Markus. Göttingen 1937, p.162

powers knew. Definitely, this answer should have been for Jesus a sign that he has successfully elevated his disciples above every other man, a sign that they were already members of the new kingdom of God, men who were ready to accept the will of God even when it contradicted their own expectations.

It is also possible that Jesus knew that his disciples would say that he was the Christ, for they had seen him do what no ordinary man in the past or present had done or could do. The question still remains - What type of Christ ? Jesus may have put this question to correct any false impression or idea of his messiahship. Peter's idea of the Christ corresponded with that of his fellow countrymen and -women, who expected the Christ to deliver the Jews from foreign rule; the eschatological king sent by God (Dan.7,13-14; Joh. 7,27,41; 9,22; 12,34), a king like the kings of old (Ps.2; 72; 110).

In the long run, the confession of Peter amounted to a false conception of his person and aspirations; he and his fellow disciples could be numbered among those who said he was either Elijah, John the Baptist or one of the prophets. In other words, the disciples did not comprehend fully his personality and identity as long as they did not know what he stood for. As if he knew that they could have a wrong conception of him, he began to explain to them what the messiahship implied and at the same time explained the scriptures. Jesus asked the disciples not to reveal to people his identity and went on to tell them "the Son of man must suffer many things, and be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and be killed, and after three days rise again". His asking them not to tell anybody that he was the Christ indicates that he accepted the confession of St.Peter, and then went further to clear up all misunderstanding by revealing to them all that would come upon him.

Christ discussion with his disciples (8,27-33) was introduced by Mark with a remark on Christ's healing of a blind man (8,22-26). According to Mark, Jesus came to Bethsaida, took a blind man by the hand " spite on his eyes and laid his hands upon him, he asked him, Do you see anything? And he looked up and said, I see men; but they

look like trees, walking. Then again he laid his hands upon his eyes; and he looked intently and was restored". This story, most likely intended to be an analogy to the forthcoming discussion with the disciples, can be compared with Peter and the disciples whose concept of the Messiah was almost the opposite of what it was supposed to be; they saw his kingship upside down just like the man who after the first healing saw men looking like trees, walking. Just as Christ laid his hands again upon his eyes in order that he could see clearly, so also did Christ take the pain to correct the wrong notion the disciples might have had about his kingship.

The necessity of suffering has been a known teaching in Judaism since the time of Deuteroisaiah (Is.53; Jer.10,19-20), but was limited to the people of God in general. What is possible for an entire people must also be applicable to the individuals. As far as the Son of man is a man like every other man, he must have to experience sorrow and death like every other man, but as far as he is God, sorrow and death have no power over him. Peter, as it seems, recognized Jesus' Godly nature but lost sight of his human nature, so the problem was for him and his fellow disciples how he could be God and at the same time be a man like every other man; and how could it come about that he would be rejected by the whole people who were awaiting his coming. From now onwards the struggle between God's mystery and human knowledge and expectation became intensified (11,27ff; 12,13-37; 14).

According to Mark, Peter was not impressed by the prophecy of Christ, and therefore took him aside and began to rebuke him. According to Matthew, Peter said to him: "God forbid, Lord! This shall never happen to you" (Mt.16,22), Jesus rebuked him saying what no one except Satan expected, "Get behind me, Satan! For you are not on the side of God, but of men" (Mk. 8,33).

The very fact that Peter rebuked him before the other disciples shows intimate the relationship between the two was (Joh.15,15). Christ could not afford to abandon the way of the cross, or else his whole mission would be a disappointment. For that reason, the

attempt to reject the crucified Christ by the disciples and followers would be their greatest danger. ¹⁷

Paul saw the gospel as the word about the cross (1Cor.1,18) inasmuch as the gospel is the word on the paradox of the cross as a disgrace and a sign of a criminal and at the same time a sign of redemption of mankind. For the Jews, no worse thing can happen to a man than crucifixion, for according to Moses, a hanged man is accursed by God (Dt. 21,22-23; Gal.3,13).

Satan and Peter have been until now the only outsiders who have identified Jesus as the expected Christ and the two have for various reasons attempted to hinder his mission (Mk.1,12; 8,33). Obviously Peter as a Jew could not but have the same concept of the Christ as his fellow countrymen. What must have interested Mark was the difficulty the disciples had in believing their master; although he prophesised all that would happen to him, but they seemed not ready to believe him; thus the incident surrounding his arrest and the behaviour of the disciples. The cross has become the turning point of history, more especially the history of the people of God and their right against the wicked. ¹⁸ Jesus had to suffer and die and eventually rise from the dead to demonstrate to his followers that these are imperative necessities in his new kingdom, of which no one should be ashamed. Christ had to go this way in order to show that he was also the saviour of the disgraced, the oppressed and the dead; that's why St.Paul had to say that nothing can separate us from the love of Christ, neither persecution ... nor death or life ... (Rom.8,35-39).

4.1,4 JESUS REVELATION OF HIS GLORY (Mk.9,2-13)

"And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and led them up a high mountain apart by themselves; and he was transfigured before them, and his garments became glistening, intensely white, as no fuller on earth could bleach them" (9,2-3).

17. Joachim Gnilka. Das Evangelium n. Markus II, a.a.O., p.17

18. Ethelbert Stauffer. Die Theologie des Neuen Testaments.
Stuttgart 1941. p.110

As if Jesus knew that the disciples were a little bit confused because of his statements concerning his eventual suffering, arrest, crucifixion, death and resurrection. He therefore took as usual the most prominent three - Peter, James and John apart to strengthen and prove more the verbal confession of Peter, that he was the expected Christ and to prove also that his form of Messiahship was neither a contradiction of the law nor of the prophets and moreover was approved and sanctioned by his father in heaven. Jesus had to manifest his glory to them so that they would have the courage to endure his crucifixion and death. These are the two sides of one coin - humiliation and glorification. His followers must be ready to welcome the two while doing God's will, but at the end comes the unending glorification (Resurrection).

In the Old Testament, people used to associate God's self-revelation with mountains, at times regarded as a place where man could encounter God (Ex.19,20; 1Kg.19,8; Num. 27,12). In the New Testament as a place of prayers (Mk. 6,46,9,2; Lk. 6,12,9,28), a place where Jesus often encountered the people either to teach them or to reveal himself (Mt.5,1-7,29; 15,29-39; Joh.6,3-13). In the Old Testament and also in the New Testament, a white cloth is often a symbol of the apocalyptic revelation and the Divine presence (Dn.7,9; Mt.28,3; Mk.16,5; Joh.20,12; Acts 1.10) as well as a symbol of the eschatological glory of the saints (Rev.3,4; 5,18; 4,4;6,11; 7,9.12). Jesus, the Messiah and an image of Moses (Dt.18, 15) encountered God in midst of cloud (Ex.34,5) and whose face was shining after the encounter with God (Ex.34,29); Jesus to whom Elijah came to prepare the people for his coming as the prophets foretold it (Malch.4,5-6).

This story by Mark corresponds to the whole Markian system of narration whereby a teaching or a revelation is followed by a question and an explanation (4,10-20; 7,17-18f 8,16-27; 9,28-29; 10,10-12). "And there appeared to them Elijah with Moses; and they were talking to Jesus. And Peter said to Jesus, Master, it is well that we are here; let us make three booths, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah. For he did not know what to say, for they were

exceedingly afraid. And a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, This is my beloved Son; listen to him" (9,4-7). The appearance of Moses and Elijah signalled the advent of the messianic era and the dispensation of the law and the prophets (Lk.16, 16). ¹⁹ Moses was the great lawgiver with whom God spoke face to face like friends (Dt.5,4-5), who stood between God and the people as a mediator. It was through him that God led his people out of slavery in Egypt to freedom in Canaan (Dt.3,17). It was through him that God made a new covenant with the people in Mount Horeb, which consisted of the commandments of the Lord and his statutes and ordinances, laws that would govern them in their new home in Canaan and through all generations (Dt.5-30); words about the great prophet whom the Lord would raise up to lead the people as Moses had "I will raise up for them a prophet like you from among their brethren; and I will put my words in his mouth, and he shall speak in my name, I myself will require it of him" (Dt. 18,18).

Elijah was a great prophet who worked and lived as the kings of Israel sinned against God. He lived during the reign of King Ahab, who offended God more than all the kings of Israel who had lived before him (1Kg.16,33); he worshipped Baal and erected an altar for Baal in the house he built for Baal in Samaria (1 Kg.16,32). Elijah, following in the footsteps of Moses who led the people out of Egypt destroying and disgracing the Egyptian army and their Pharaoh, Elijah led the people out of the dominion of foreign gods, which actually never existed (1Kg. 18,38-40) and reestablished the tradition of Moses, and of social justice (1Kg.21, 17-24). Jesus' appearance with the two is a sign of continuity and at the same time an end to the religious concepts whereby the human heart and conscience would take over the rule of the law and prophetism (Jer.31,31-34; 32,39; Ezk.36,25 ff). In the New Testament, Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of the prophets by opposing the formalism of the Pharisees. Man's relation to the law would have to be modified; the law would no longer consist of

19. Frederick C.Grunt, Halford Luccock. The Gospel according to St. Mark, New York 1947, p. 776

exterior importance or a law written on tablets of stone but on men's hearts, an undisputable fact which was missing in the old covenant. For Paul, man is justified only by faith in Jesus Christ, not by the works of the law (Gal.2,16; Rom.3,38).

Mark, as it were, concentrated on the reaction of the disciples of Jesus to this encounter, who instead of reflecting on the implication of such a meeting were much more interested in the outside appearance of Jesus and the joy it gave them. As a result, Peter again in the name of the others, persuaded Christ to allow them to remain permanently in the glory on the mountain. But then Mark excused Peter by saying that he did not know what he was saying, for they were all taken by fear. One could understand Peter's statement as a sort of temptation on Christ to abandon the way of suffering to which he was destined and to dwell in the glory on the mountain. This is a temptation equally as grievous as the rebuke of Peter in (8,32), Christ came not only for the three disciples but for all of mankind and could therefore not restrict himself on the mountain away from the people; and moreover, suffering, death and resurrection were indispensable to the messianic life of Christ.

Instead of Christ rebuking Peter as he did in (8,33), his father spoke on his behalf (a voice), which confirmed him as the Son of man and at the same time the Son of God, whom like Moses, they had to listen to (Dt.18,15) and whom no one should contradict (Dn7, 13-14). Without doubt, the disciples must have heard a Godly and traditional confirmation of all that Christ had been saying about his person, his teaching and his future. It is now left to see what they would make of this highest ever possible revelation of Christ's Godliness and the authenticity of his teachings.

In general, the revelation was meant to strengthen the faith of the disciples to follow their master without fear, the Son of God, for the way which he goes leads through the cross but does not end in the cross. 20

20. Joachim Gnilka. Das Evangelium n. Markus II, a.a.O., pp.37, 39

4.1,5

DENIAL AS THE RESPONSE TO CHRIST'S SELF-REVELATION

Aware of what would be coming to his disciples, Christ took time to prepare them against falling away or hoping that they were called to a glory where one would not have to encounter any more suffering. After prophesing the destruction of the temple and the tribulation that would follow (13, 1-8) he foretold what would happen to the disciples themselves. He said to them "they will deliver you up to councils; and you will be beaten in synagogues; and you will stand before governors and kings for my sake, to bear testimony before them and you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved" (13,9-13). Peter, James, John and Andrew took him aside to find out from him when Jerusalem and the temple would be destroyed. Christ took the opportunity to tell them not only the signs that would indicate the time of the destruction of the temple but also to warn them of their own sufferings, i.e. 'the things that they would have to undergo for being his disciples. In other words, Jesus had to keep the disciples aware of the fact that they were not called to have an easy ride but to endure sufferings and hatred for his name's sake. In this way, he prepared them to withstand and understand his own suffering, aware of the fact that the same would come on them some time.²¹ They therefore had to learn from his example, not to run away from the will of God but to do it, for the Spirit of God would be with them at that time.

Just as the Son of man had to carry the cross and be crucified in order to come into his glory so also the disciples would have to endure to the end in order to be saved (13,13). The Son of man will be coming at the end of the world in clouds with great power and glory after having gone the way of the cross; no doubt the same would be applicable to the disciples, who were called to follow the steps of their Lord.²²

21. Josef Schmid. Das Evangelium n. Markus II, a.a.O., p. 240

22. Joachim Gnilka. Das Evangelium n. Markus II, a.a.O., p. 211

A PROPHECY OF THE DENIAL OF ST. PETER

"And Jesus said to them, you will all fall away; for it is written, I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep will be scattered. But after I am raised up, I will go before you to Galilee. Peter said to him, even though they all fall away, I will not. And Jesus said to him, truly, I say to you, this very night, before the cock crows twice, you will deny me three times. But he said vehemently, if I must die with you, I will not deny you. And they all said the same" (Mk. 14,27-31).

Mark illustrates to his readers once more the efforts Jesus made to prepare his disciples for his crucifixion and death. He had to tell them what would happen in a few days' time, things which had already been laid down by his father in heaven, so that when they happened they would not be scandalised but come to believe more in Jesus as the Holy One of God, who has even the future and his own life in his hands. Jesus told them of his resurrection which would follow and his meeting with them in Galilee, for neither the cross nor the denial would mean the end.²³

Peter seems here to accept the way of the cross of his master, promising him his bystand. He speaks now for himself and no longer for the entire disciples. This is a confession quite similar to that he made at Caesarea Philippi (8,29) to the glorious nature of Christ, which excludes suffering and death. Here now, he seems to confess his willingness even to suffer with him. Although he meant what he said, the history of the passion later revealed that he must have never been convinced that Jesus would really suffer death. How can a man who raises the dead, whom a voice in heaven declared as the Son of the Most High, a man who talked with Moses and Elijah, see death. With regards to the assurance of Peter that he would prefer to die with him rather than deny him, compared to what actually happened when they saw him helpless before the leaders of the Jews, one comes to the conclusion that the willingness to die with him implied only

23. Ibid., p. 253

the Godly nature of Christ; but as long as he remained a man like every other man, he was not worth dying for.

JESUS IN THE GARDEN OF GETHSEMANE (Mk. 14, 32-42)

"And he came and found them sleeping, and he said to Peter, Simon, are you asleep? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak ... And again he came and found them sleeping, for their eyes were very heavy; and they did not know what to answer him. And he came the third time, and said to them, are you still sleeping and taking your rest? It is enough; the hour has come; the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners" (Mk. 14,37-41).

Jesus once more took Peter, James and John (14,33), the three who knew him more than the others, in order to reveal to them his human nature, that he is a man like every other man who can be afraid, and who can need comfort from men. As if he knew that they would be of no use to him, he went farther alone in order to discuss his passion with his father from whom he got the needed moral support and expected his disciples to do the same thing. Jesus prayed to his father like every man in great need and distress, this is what the disciples are supposed to have seen so that they would gather courage in the hour of their own persecution. He had wanted them to pray and be conscious of the impending danger in order that they would not be caught unaware, ²⁴ Peter is here no longer worthy to answer the name Peter (rock) because he had failed to play the role of a rock; Mark therefore called by his old name Simon, thereby summarising the history of Jesus and Peter, as well as the history of God and men, and, more particularly, the history of God and the Israelites. That was not the end of their relationship, He had even pardoned them before they could ask for pardon; He told them that they would meet him, when all these are over in Galilee (14,28). As Jesus came to the disciples the second time, he found them sleeping for their eyes were heavy; and like their reaction during his transfiguration, "they did not know what to answer him", (9,6). In contrast to the behaviour of Adam and Eve in the garden who wanted to be like God (Gen.3,1-19) and rebelled against God, Jesus in obedience to the father became man in all his aspects, except in sinning (Heb.5,7-10), so that man would remain man.

24. William Lane. Commentary on The Gospel of Mark. Michigan 1974, p.519

THE DENIAL OF ST. PETER (Mk. 14, 66-72)

The history of the passion of Christ by Mark looks like the central point of a circle of an axis on which a body rotates. Mark mentioned in the second half of his gospel in three places the forthcoming death of Christ (8,31; 9,31; 10,33 f) illustrating his human nature, who is at the same time the Son of God (1,11; 9,7; 15,39). ²⁵ Mark carefully connected the denial of Peter with the bold assertion of Christ of his messiahship; one denies his identity (14,54. 66-72) the other confesses it (14,53. 55-65). ²⁶ Peter was asked, "You also were with the Nazarene, Jesus;" Peter answered, "I neither know nor understand what you mean"; he was later asked a second and third time, and gave the same answer, denying his master "I do not know this man of whom you speak" (14, 67-71). Surely, he did not believe nor was he attracted to Jesus because of human nature which unmistakably was prominent during his trial. Who would associate himself with one condemned to death as a criminal by a whole nation, now helpless before the Romans whom he was supposed to humiliate as the Messiah of Israel; could the disciples not have had the impression that he might have been deceiving them? If he were the Son of God, why would God allow him to be treated like a criminal? Or who would be ready to associate himself with a criminal, or identify himself with a man nailed on the cross?

In contrast to Peter who denied himself and his Lord, Jesus accepted and revealed his identity and identified himself with his father in heaven, who at the moment couldn't rescue him from being crucified, yet he did not deny him. Jesus acknowledged his power by the father; he would sit on the right had of the father, which in Israel would mean to have the highest place of honour (1Kg.2,19; Ps. 110,1; 1Esdr.4,29). His triumph over his foes is completed with his coming with the clouds of heaven to judge all mankind (8,38; 13,37). ²⁷

25. Lothar Ruppert. Jesus als der leidende Gerechte ?
Stuttgart 1972, p. 56

26. Ludger Schenke. Der Gekreuzigte Christus. Stuttgart 1974,
p.15, 22

27. Rudolf Pesch. Das Markus Evangelium. p.438 f

When Jesus told the Jews the truth about his person, he for the first time admitted his title as the expected Christ, who would later sit at the right hand of Power (14,62). He assured them that they would one day see the Son of man, whom they at the moment condemned as blasphemer and criminal, sit at the right hand of God, and would on that day say who is a criminal and God's blasphemer.²⁸ In other words, Jesus confessed the presence of God among the helpless, the rejected, the persecuted, the oppressed, the hungry and all those who suffer social injustice, by saying that he was the Christ (Mt. 25,31-46), thus identifying himself with the above mentioned people in difficulty and need. On the other hand, Peter would be ready to identify himself with only the successful on earth and the mighty, a tendency which is very human. Thus the difference between God the father of all mankind, especially those in need, and man himself who sees the poor, the rejected and the exploited as those cursed by God.

It was for the Chief priest and the leaders of the Jews a great blasphemy to hear that the Christ would come in the form of a poor, rejected, helpless unlettered Nazarene, and therefore tore their garments as a sign that Jesus has blasphemed God, a sign which was earlier meant for mourning (Gen. 37,29; Judt. 14,19; 2 Macc. 4,38), following which he was overwhelmingly condemned.²⁹

Peter acted according to the flesh, "the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak" (14,38), and Christ on the other hand acted according to the spirit (Joh. 18,36 f), and thereby making clear the difference between the fruits of the two. If Peter had listened to the words of Christ, which warned him against denying him and being scandalised by him (8,34-38; 14,27-31), he could have been able to muster courage to stay by his side. He later had to weep for not taking Christ seriously and for judging him according to his own standards and expectations. The same Peter who drew out his sword to fight for his master (Joh. 18,10; Mk. 14,47), now denied him even

28. A.L.Moor. The Parousia in the New Testament. Leiden 1966, p.139, 142

29. Josef Schmid. Das Evangelium nach Markus II. a.a.O., p. 283

before women whose witness in Jewish custom does not carry much weight.³⁰ But Jesus did not deny him (14,28).

4.1,6

CHRIST'S DEATH AND RESURRECTION (15, 33-39; 16)

"And Jesus uttered a loud cry, and breathed his last. And the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom. And when the centurion, who stood facing him, saw that he thus breathed his last, he said, truly this man was the Son of God!" (15, 37-39).

Death on the cross was for the Romans the most disgraceful art of execution after the 'damnatio ad bestias' (thrown to the wild beasts); it was a type of execution reserved for slaves and people who had committed treason or other similar offences. For the Jews, death on the cross was a curse from God (Ga.5,11; 1Gor.1,23) and therefore the crucified had to be buried the same day as ordered by the law (Dt. 21,23).³¹

Christ was mocked while he was hanging on the cross, the people passing by wagged their heads, a Jewish sign of mockery (Ps. 22,8; Ps.109,25; Is.37,22); they said, "He saved others; he cannot save himself" (15,31). With these words, the chief priests wanted to draw attention to the wonders he had worked to the so-called good works he had done which were in their interpretation the work of the devil they said was in him (Mk.3,22); moreover, he had healed on sabbath (Mk.3,1-6) and sat at table with tax collectors and sinners (2,15-16). If the works he had done were actually from God, if he had been a good man, he would not have broken the sabbath, for God would not allow his own man to suffer. The logic at work is that only evil men suffer, or suffering is a punishment from God. By identifying himself with all the innocent victims of human injustice and hatred, he glorified suffering on behalf of the truth, and showed solidarity for all who suffer unjustly. According to the gospel of St. John, Jesus told Pilate, "Every one who is of the truth hears my voice" (Joh. 18,37c), he has sanctified the way for all who would suffer for the sake of the truth,

30. Hermann Strack, Paul Billerbeck. Kommentar zum Neuen Testament.

Aus Talmud und Midrasch, München 1974, 1.8: IV, 1

31. Joachim Gnilka. Das Evangelium nach Markus II, a.a.O., p. 319

referring more specifically to his followers. On the other hand one of the criminals for whom he died even followed the people passing by in mocking him,³² indicating the fact that his death sanctified the suffering of the unjust and the repentant only (Lk. 23, 39-43).

That he uttered a loud cry and breathed his last indicates that he died like every other normal man. He had lived like a man like every other man and had died like every other man, but what followed his death showed that he was not an ordinary man like every other man; but what could he be? Shortly before his death he cried to God, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me" (34), identifying himself with those who seek God but do not find him, as well as with those who do believe that God has abandoned them in their sufferings. His cry indicates his trust in God,³³ the signs that followed his death and his resurrection proved that God did not forsake him, and would also not forsake those who suffer unjustly.

We were told that the curtain of the temple tore in two from top to bottom (38), signifying the end of the temple and priest cult of Jerusalem. The temple was opened to all, including the pagans; everyone could now reach God without an intermediary; God's majesty was laid open to all.³⁴ Jesus cried to God in his suffering, but his suffering did not harden his heart against God. When all was fulfilled, he gave up his spirit with a loud cry, a great cry characteristic of spirit possessors (Mk. 1,26; 5,7; Lk. 1,42; Ex.15,2).³⁵ Beside the cross of Jesus stood an impartial observer, namely a Roman centurion, who was neither a Jew nor a follower of Christ, having perhaps followed the passion of Christ till his death, who came to the conclusion that Jesus was indeed the Son of God, which he had claimed to be. It is remarkable that a gentile was the only one to identify Jesus as the Son of God even in the midst of suffering, humiliation and helplessness. To say that a criminal, crucified on the cross and rejected by all the people is the Son of God requires

32. Ibid., p. 321

33. Joachim Gnilka. a.a.O., p. 322

34. Ibid., p. 324

35. Rudolf Pesch. Das Markus Evangelium, Freiburg 1977, p. 497

extra grace from God. The statement from the Roman centurion "Truly this man was the Son of God", is in a way the summary of the life and works of Christ; when one has finished reading the gospel one would definitely be moved to say; the meaning of the whole story is to show how God revealed himself in glory and in suffering; he was easily rejected as the suffering messiah, who came to his suffering people. The people believed that only one who could not suffer was the one capable of redeeming them because suffering was for them a sign of weakness and a curse. A helpless man cannot save anyone. The cross therefore became a turning point in the history of mankind; God became man and revealed Himself as a man in need; helpless, rejected and oppressed by his fellow men (Mt. 25, 31-46).

Among the followers of Jesus who remained faithful to him while he was hanging on the cross were a few women (15,40-41), looking from afar and perhaps they saw where he was buried, and it was these three women who came on the Sunday morning to anoint him. On their arrival at the tomb, they saw that he was no longer there but rather saw a young man, who said to them, "Do not be amazed; you seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He has risen, ... But go, tell his disciples and Peter that he is going before you to Galilee; there you will see him as he told you" (16, 6-7). The antithesis "the crucified", and "the risen", show the interplay between the Godly and the human action, which are in contrast to one another; ³⁶ the crucified is risen, the rejected and humiliated has been exalted, the helpless, oppressed, poor and dead man has risen above all (Philip.2,6-11). Women, whose witness was traditionally disregarded, ³⁷ were witnesses to the resurrection of Christ; God corrects the tradition. His readiness to meet his disciples once more shows that he did not reject them even though they had rejected him while he was in pain, and had been ashamed of him. Nevertheless, all happened in order to fulfill the will of God, who could reveal himself in joy, sadness or in disappointment.

Mark showed his reader that Simon who was called Peter (rock) was not even strong enough to hold himself, much less strengthening his fellow disciples. This same Peter and his fellow disciples later

36. Ibid., p. 533

37. Hermann Strack, Paul Billerbeck, NT Commentary, a.a.O. ref. Rash I, 8, Shebuoth IV, I

formed the fundament of evangelisation and Christianity. They were naive, inconsistent and unbelievable (Lk. 24, 25-26; Joh. 20,25-29) but God in spite of that chose them as instruments of human salvation, for God's ways are not our ways.

4.1,6 CONCLUSION

Jesus wanted men who would continue his work on earth, he wanted men who would follow in his footsteps and be other Christs (Joh.13,15; 14,12). Mark narrates the difficulties Jesus encountered in his attempt to teach his disciples to believe in him and to follow in his footsteps. The disciples according to Mark were after earthly rulership and glory, ideas which contradicted the message of Christ. Christ's indication of his sufferings and death were rejected by his disciples (Mk.6,31; 9,31; 10,32-34/8, 32 f, 34 ff; 9,33 ff; 10,42 ff). Jesus made it clear to his disciples that following his example was the only condition to discipleship i.e., being other Christs.

There is no doubt that Jesus wanted his disciples to be what he was. St. Matthew made it clear to his readers that the life of Christ was intended as an example for the Christians, who would encounter opposition and persecution (Mt.10,16,17 ff, 26 ff . 34 ff.37 ff. 40 ff). The disciples should expect the sufferings and the glory of their master (Mt.10,24 f; Joh.15,20; 17,14/Mt. 10,39; Joh.12,25/Mt. 10,32;Joh.9,22; 12,42/Mt. 10,22; Joh.15,18/Mt. 10,21; Joh.16,1 ff). Just as the Son of man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk.10,45), so also did he require of his followers to serve instead of being served and to give their lives as ransom for many. According to St.John, the followers of Christ must glorify God through their sufferings and death (Joh.21,19), through which they have to draw the whole world to God (Joh.15,18-21), and bring fruits,"Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit (Joh.12,24). In contrast to OT, Christ demanded from his followers a total submission to God's will which could lead through persecution and death, but at the end is the reward (Mk.10,29-30). God is no longer a means to prosperity and glory alone but to suffering and death for His sake. God is no longer a means to the glory of man, but man as a creature of God is meant for the glory of God and man is indirectly glorified through the glory of

God and his willingness to do the will of God which consists of self-denial and unconditional love of one's neighbour. To this end the followers of Christ need his spirit and words.

4.2,0 THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST AS THE PERFECTION OF GOD'S SELF REVELATION

4.2,1 THE SPIRIT OF GOD AS A PRINCIPLE OF LIFE (VITALISM)

Spirit is understood in the Old Testament as wind or breath (ruah). The Old Testament distinguishes the spirit of God from the spirit of man and spirit as a mere wind. The spirit as wind is something very mysterious, it has an irresistible violence, it can destroy all standing objects (Ezk.13,13; 27,26); it sometimes manifests itself in a murmur (1Kg.19,12) and at times dries seas (ex.14,21). As the spirit of man, a divine gift in man, man's own life, (Gen.2,7) it comes from God, and determines the beingness of man. This spirit of God in man is God's own grace in man which he neither asked for nor worked for and without which he cannot exist.³⁸

This spirit expresses human feelings like fear (Gen.41,8), anger (Judg.6,3) and joy (Gen.45,27). Such a spirit could also possess a man, a spirit which was originally not his own; it could be an evil spirit such as jealousy (Num.5,14-30), hatred (Judg.9,23), prostitution (Hos.4,12), or impurity (Ze.13,2). It could also be a good spirit such as justice (Is.28,6) or a spirit of supplication (Ze.12,10). Spirits in general are regarded in the OT as coming from God (Judg.9,23; 1Sam.19,9; 1Kgs,22,23) as a punishment or as a reward; a spirit could bring a change in a man and influences the consciousness and values of one such as the new spirit urged for by the prophets Isaiah and Ezekiel (Is.11,2; Ezk.36, 26ff). God works and controls human history through his spirit in man; just as God owns the spirit so also does the spirit control the human heart which works according to the spirit in man.³⁹

Life came to the earth through the spirit of God which he sent down to the earth (Gen.1,2). God created the heavens through His words

38. Karl-Heinz Weger. Karl Rahner. An Introduction to His Theology. New York 1960, p. 108

39. Reclams Bibel Lexikon. a.a.O. p. 159 f

and the hosts of heavens by the breath of His mouth (Ps.33,6). His sovereign spirit made all that is (Is.40,13); the spirit which makes the wilderness fruitful (Is.32,15) and He gives His spirit to man to keep man alive (Gen.2,7; Is.42,5).

Man's life depends on this life-giving spirit of God (Job 34,14f; Ps.104,29); and therefore all things that have life must praise the Lord (Ps.150,6; Job 33,3f). This same spirit through which God recreates the face of the earth (Ps. 104,30) through individuals like Joseph (Gen.41,38), Moses (Num.11,17; Is.63,11), Joshua (Num 27,18), and the judges, the spirit which was upon Othniel and Jephthah (Judg. 3,10; 11,29), the same spirit swept down like a bird on its prey (Judg. 14,6; 1Sam.11,6) and possessed a man like his property (Judg. 6,34). Remarkably, the spirit that takes possession of the judges leave them the moment their mission completed, and in many cases they are called into the service of the kings who have permanent functions (1Sam.10,6; 16,13). ⁴⁰

Prophetism owes its authenticity to this spirit of God, because He uses the prophets (men) to convey Gods words and instructions (2Kgs.2,9; Ezk.3,12; Mich.3,8; Neh.9,30; Zach.7,12). The man whom God himself would anoint as a king of his people, the messiah, would have the spirit remaining in him for ever (Is.11,2), the servant of God (Is.42,1) in whom His spirit rests, through whose help the messiah would carry the good new to all people (Is.61,1-3). Not only the messiah would possess this special spirit of God but also the entire people of God, a spirit which would bring in justice, peace and security (Is.32, 15-17), a spirit which would give the people a new heart (Ezk.36,25-27), a spirit which would bring life to skeletons (Ezk.37,1-14). This spirit would be at the disposal of all (Joel 3,1-5), a spirit which protects the people (Hag.2,5) and leads them into salvation (Zach.4,6). The spirit of God leads men on the right way (Ps.143,10) because the spirit is wisdom itself (Wisd.9,17) and discriminates against no one; it simply fills the whole world (Wisd.1,7) and is in everyone (Wisd.12,1).

40. Xavier Leon-Dufour. Dictionary of Biblical Theology.

London 1973, p. 571 f

From all we have seen, the spirit of God is the donor of life, strength, virtues and Godliness. Its absence would mean death, its presence means life to man. Surely, all created beings have share in this spirit, and that is why we call it the ultimate principle of vitalism or life. To live is to participate in God's own being; we eventually come to know God and grasp his self-revelation through this spirit in us.

4.2,2 REVELATION IN THE OLD TESTAMENT AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD'S

REVELATION:

According to the second Vatican Council, the purpose of the divine revelation is to "make known to us the hidden purpose of His will (cf.Eph.1,9) by which through Christ, the word made flesh, man has access to the Father in the Holy Spirit and comes to share in the divine nature (cf.Eph.2,8; 2Pet.1,4). Through this revelation, therefore, the invisible God (cf.Col.1,15; 1Tim.1,17) out of the abundance of His love speaks to men as friends (cf.Ex.33,11; Joh.15,14-15) and lives among them (cf.Bar.3,38), so that He may invite and take them into fellowship with Himself".⁴¹

Mankind has a knowledge of God through God's self-revelation, a revelation whereby the infinite and unlimited enters the world of the finite and limited.⁴² In every religion where He is seen as the infinite and unlimited, the religion in question can be said to be absolute.⁴³ But how on earth can the unlimited, infinite God, who is inconceivable, manifest himself so that he could be conceived of by man? And how can man be in a position to receive God's self-revelation? God's self-revelation is a gift to man,⁴⁴ aimed at human fulfillment, whereby the giver and the gift are the same.⁴⁵ Since the giver is the almighty, unlimited and infinite God himself, man can therefore not comprehend his gift; the quality of this gift

41. Walter Abbot. The Documents of Vatican II, London 1967, p.112

42. Paul Tillich. Religionsphilosophie. 1962, p. 9

43. Paul Tillich. Ges. Werke I 1959, p. 382

44. Hans Waldenfels. Offenbarung Bd.3, München 1969, p. 80

45. Karl Rahner. Grundkurs des Glaubens, Freiburg 1984, p. 126

overwhelms man, what he can comprehend in this self-manifestation of God himself is the love God has for him, that the absolute almighty thinks of the little. One begins to see how God sees things, His mercy and love; one begins to identify oneself with these revealed qualities of God which one sees as means of self-fulfillment and participation in the nature of God. So for God who speaks to men as friends, invites and takes men into fellowship with Himself, the manifestation of His love is the hidden purpose of His will. God reveals Himself in words and deeds whose credibility lie in the love they show.

God reveals Himself in love and is known to man in love which compels man to respond in love. Out of love, God the unending and absolute being condescends Himself, enters into contract with man and cares for the most desperate of all men. Those to whom He reveals Himself, communicates Himself and who appropriately respond to His invitation, know His spirit; His spirit abides in them. God's revelation is made with regard to one's experience, situation and the will of God. Since God's self-revelation aims at man's experience i.e., uses human language, terms and acts relevant and understandable to man to solve human problems and to put across his will and reveal his love and care, theology has to be anthropocentric.⁴⁶ Since man is capable of receiving God's revelation, a transcendental experience,⁴⁷ revelation therefore has to be considered in its anthropological and theocentrical essence which in reality are the same thing when one understands the absolute transcendence of God.⁴⁸

In the Old Testament, like in many ancient religions, God reveals Himself in the works of His hands; His creation reveals Him in His wisdom and sovereign power (Job 25,7-14; Prov.8, 23-31; Sir.42,15-43, 33). He veils himself in the works of his hands; in clouds (Ex.13,21); in a burning fire (Ex.3,2; Gen.15,17); in a thundering storm (Ex.19,16) and in a soft gentle breeze (1Kgs.19,12f). God revealed Himself to the house of Israel in Egypt (1Sam.2,27), to Moses through words and the mighty deeds of His hands (Is.52, 10;53,1); He revealed Himself in his

46. Karl Rahner. Schriften zur Theologie.VIII,Freiburg 1967, p.43

47. Karl Rahner. Grundkurs des Glaubens. a.a.O., p. 137

48. Karl Rahner. Schriften zur Theologie. a.a.O. p. 43

mercy (Is.56,1) and in His justice and salvation (Ps.98,2f). God reveals His power and grace (Jer.16,21), His name (Ex.3,6), His plans (Ex.33,12), His secrets (Ps.50,8). He reveals the way to life (Ps.15,11) makes known His demands (1Kgs.8,36; 2Chron.6,27) and His will (Ps.24,4; Ez.20,11). God reveals His spirit through His words and actions to individuals and groups so that His spirit may abide by the people without which the people could not do what is right in his sight.

4.2,3 GOD'S REVELATION IN THE NEW TESTAMENT AND THE SPIRIT OF
CHRIST

The revelation begun in the Old Testament is fulfilled in the New Testament in the person of Christ.⁴⁹ The word of God which was spoken to men of all ages and times and particularly to the people of Israel, at a definite time took flesh to demonstrate to the world that there is no difference between the word spoken, its demands and the practical aspect of it, and to reveal the love and lowliness of God as well as his humanity. This word that became man is, as man, the self-manifestation and self-relinquishment of God himself, who manifests himself by relinquishing himself and shows himself as love.⁵⁰ God become man will remain forever man, thats why christology could be said to be the beginning and end of anthropology. Through the incarnation of Christ, God took his habitation among men, He becomes man and is present among men and is no longer the one who lives in the heavens,⁵¹ a fact which does not affect his infinite and unlimited nature. Christ became for all mankind the way to the father, a means of participating in His nature and the future of mankind because Christ and God's acts of love are the origin of every other word and deed of God.⁵² God's revelation in Jesus Christ is an expression of God's care and love of mankind. God enters into a personal relationship with man,

49. Gerhard von Rad. Theologie des AT.II, a.a.O., p. 348

50. Karl Rahner. Grundkurs des Glaubens. a.a.O., p. 222

51. Ibid., p. 223

52. Hans Waldenfels. Offenbarung. a.a.O., p. 175

and that's why life and works of Christ have become to all a personal invitation to encounter God himself. 53

Revelation is God's gift and love and takes place in God's grace and care (Mt.11,25; 16,17; Rom.3,21) as well as in Christ's grace and love (Mt.11,27; Lk.2,32; Joh.17,6; Gal.1,12; Joh.4,9; Apc.1,1) and through the spirit of God (1Cor.2,10;12,7; Eph.1,17; Hebr.9,8). God revealed himself in Jesus in such a wonderful and unexpected way that the Jews, even the disciples of Jesus, could no longer follow because his life contradicted all their expectations. The gospels are an account of the salvation history and in a particular way a summary of God's encounter at all ages with mankind which has always ended with a demonstration of mankind's inability to respond favourably to God's initiative. St. Mark's gospel in particular, as we have earlier seen, concentrated mainly on the sufferings of God Himself, on the difficulty He encountered while trying to reveal to His hearers the nature and will of God His father. His self-revelation contradicted in many ways their concept of God and of his will and was consequently rejected.

They preferred to have a criminal go free than to see him alive. On the side of Jesus he was quite confident of himself and his message, he therefore spoke to the people with authority, he did not speak like the Rabbis or prophets but like one who spoke of himself and of what he had had a direct experience. He perfected the old laws and the teaching of the prophets and thus became the lord of the prophets and lawgivers, a fact which he himself always justified with the phrase "But I say to you". 54

His apostles and followers came to believe in him and in his message only after the resurrection, when they saw that all that he had spoken have come into fulfillment and more over he had been raised from the dead, proof that he had been neither abandoned by God nor an evil man but what St.Peter once confessed him to be, namely, the Christ, the expected Messiah. They began to see him as the height of

53. Edward Schillebeeckx. Erfahrung aus Glauben, Freiburg 1984,p.98

54. Eduard Lohse.„Ich aber sage euch". in, Der Ruf Jesu und Die Antwort der Gemeinde.hrsq.Eduard Lohse, Göttingen 1970,pp.201, 202

God's self-revelation and a completion of the Old Testament. In the OT God revealed himself in his glory but in the NT he revealed himself in his sufferings and love for all especially for the needy and the rejected. His life was seen as an expression of his obedience to the will of his father. Unlike the people of the OT, he did not use God's love and mercy to further his own private ends and interests but rather subordinated his interests and ends under the will of God because he had the spirit of his father and was therefore one with the father.

Jesus is the word of God itself because he identified himself completely with the word and will of his father and therefore had the same spirit with him (Joh.1,1; 14,26; 15,26; 16,13-15). The spirit descended on him after his baptism where he for the first time submitted himself openly to the will of his father and was therefore openly acclaimed by God as his son on whom his spirit rests and he was later led by this same spirit into the wilderness (Mk.1,9-12) and all through his mission (Lk.4,18-19). This same spirit would be received by the disciples of Christ and by those who believed in him. That means, the spirit has to come as a consequence of belief in Christ, in other words, one has to hear the words of Christ and believe in the words in order to receive his spirit (Joh.7,39) a spirit which they would receive after he had completed his works and cleared all doubts surrounding his messiahship (Joh.16,7-11). Hearing the word and believing on the word, i.e., identifying oneself with the word of Christ, this would imply having the same spirit with Christ himself and therefore doing the very same works he did (Mt.17,20-21; 21,21-22; Mk.9,23).

The spirit that comes through faith in Christ helps in the understanding of the gifts and works of Christ for all mankind and for understanding spiritual truths (1Cor.2,10-13). Anyone who does not have this spirit does not belong to Christ (Rom.8,9). As soon as the apostles were freed they went to their friends and reported to them their experience with the chief priest and the elders. Peter, John and their friends lifted up their voices in prayers to God for strength to speak the words of Christ and to do his works; as a result they were filled with the Holy Spirit and spoke the word of

God with boldness (Acts.4,24-31). The Holy Spirit is given to those who obey God (Acts 5,32), to those who hear the word of God and believe in it (Acts.10,44-46); a spirit which creates a new heart (Ga.4,6; 2Cor.1,22; Rom.5,5) in the believers, a spirit which strengthens the already won faith of believers (Eph.1,13-14). A spirit which shows itself as love (Gal.5,6; 5,22) and renders help to man (Rom.8,26f) through whom we come to understand fully the revelation of God in Christ. According to St.Paul, "if we live by the spirit, let us also walk by the spirit. Let us have no self-conceit, no provoking of one another, no envy of one another" (Ga.5,25-26). We shall later come to see how the church coped with this spirit without which one cannot gain a full knowledge of Christ and the mystery of his life and death.

4.2,4 CONCLUSION

St.Mark showed in his gospel the sufferings of Christ and the attitude of his disciples towards his decision to obey to the last the will of his father. Mark presented the disciples and other followers of Christ as examples of men who had only the spirit of the flesh and not yet that of God. He contrasted their behaviour with that of Christ who possessed the spirit of God. The resurrection of Christ confirmed Christ as the Holy one of God and rendered authenticity to his message. In the past, God had revealed himself in his glory and majesty and therefore was expected to come in the same kingly glory and majesty. Contrary to the expectations of the people, he did not come in glory and majesty but in poverty and lowliness and therefore found the people unbelievable including his own three apostles to whom he revealed his glory and majesty. It was only after his resurrection that his own disciples fully believed in him; even the news of his resurrection fell on faithless heart (Lk.24,11;22-24; Joh.20, 9-10). If not for his personal appearances (Joh.20,27-29; Lk.24, 30-31) they could have continued to have doubts. No wonder that he said of them "O foolish men, and slow of heart to believe all that the prophets have spoken" (Lk. 20,25).

This was after their encounter with him after his resurrection (Lk.24,45-49; Mk.14-20; Mt.28,16-20), after blaming them for not

believing, after which they might have come to believe in him and to identify themselves with him. To believe and teach in his name would imply a knowledge of his spirit and the readiness to work in the light of his spirit and to be led by this same spirit that prompted all his works and teachings. To be led by this spirit of Christ would mean to live and work according to the spirit of Christ which is love etc. (Gal.5,22-24).

From all we have seen this spirit of Christ is received on condition that we (our hearts) remain open towards God's unending self-revelation which could take any form behind which is unselfish love (Gal.5,22-24; 1Cor.13-14,1). This spirit causes the works of Christ to be repeated, and his word to be proclaimed (Acts 4,30; 5,42; 6,7; 9,20; 18,5; 19,10.20). The church therefore has to be born and live in the spirit from which all that is born of God originates (Joh.3,5-6) and without which she can no longer be the body of Christ but the body of men. Jesus Christ revealed himself as a man like every other man and at the same time as the climax of human development and the perfection of humanity. A quality which could only be achieved through a consciousness of God; of man as an image of God; a being in whom the creative power of God is longing for its manifestation through a union of will with God and thereby becomes an instrument in the hands of God.

Jesus is for all mankind a model of the God-man relationship, a self-awareness through the consciousness of the presence of God and His will. He is a "compass" for all Nigerians and mankind who seek the truth; one may decide not to believe in his Godhood, he would still remain the way which all serious and human elevating religions have been seeking. The truth of his message, its eternal application and relevance which transcends cultures, religions, racial, geographical and political ideologies provides a framework for a dialogue with members of other religions especially with the Moslems who form a good percentage of the population of Nigeria as well as with the Nigerian traditional religion.

Those who accept him as the way to salvation and perfection receive his spirit, a spirit which guides them along the way of union of will with God through faith and confidence in God just as

Jesus did. A spirit which helps one to come to oneself, accept oneself as a unique individual created to continue in freedom; in whom are created the creative works of God and the promotion of life. One cannot be his follower without his spirit under which the human spirit subjects itself; where this is not the case, one might believe oneself to be of service to Christ or rather to be following the way, when in the actual sense one is following the precepts of one's own spirit and interests alone. Such selfish goals are some of the most prominent causes of divisions and separations in the one church of Christ as well as of the difficulties of the 18th and 19th. century missionary works. The church as the body of Christ, the continuation of the earthly works of Christ, is founded by the spirit of Christ; the spirit dwells in the church as well as in the Christians, members of the mystical body of Christ. The same ups and downs which existed between Jahweh and his people, between the human selfish spirit and the spirit of Christ in man exists also between the spirit of Christ in the church and the spirit of the church as a human community made up of the same individuals in whom the spirit is often silenced by personal interests and wishes.

Only the spirit of Christ can unite mankind, more especially the separated Christians. The fruits of the spirit are good works and love which do not seek a reward. We would be making a mistake if we were to believe that mere dogmatic, liturgical, political or cultural differences made the churches separate or that a mere unity in dogmatic, liturgical, canonical, cultural etc. differences may bring about a one church of Christ. A unity of the church of Christ can only be achieved through the patronage of the spirit of Christ which manifests itself in good works and love. Dogmas, liturgies etc. may differ but their aim and origin remain the same; all aim at human salvation through Christ, a work which can only be initiated by the spirit and completed by the same spirit in everyone, a salvation which in a way begins on earth, in the freedom and well-being of man and ends in their perfection in the next world. It is the duty of the church to promote these two aspects of salvation just as Jesus did (Lk.4,18-19). The church is challenged, now we shall come to see how the church faces this challenge.

CHAPTER FIVE

THE CHURCH

5.1,0

INTRODUCTION

"The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. The earth produces of itself, first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come" (Mk.4,26-29).

In the same way does the church, which is supposed to be the kingdom of God on earth, grow; the faith is the response to a particular man's action, an historical action which could at any time and place be made vivid and relevant to every situation. The internal growth and the cause of being of the faith often remains hidden to a second person or to the human transmitter of the faith. In other words the growth of faith is no human action as such. Men could preach the kingdom of God but why actually people respond to their teaching or why people come to believe will ever remain unknown to the preacher. The spoken word of God takes flesh in one who hears and believes. In whom the word of God takes flesh, in him does the spirit of God abide and in whom his spirit abides, grows in faith and love of God and in such a man is the kingdom of God already present.

Without doubt, the church aims at a kingdom of God on earth, whereby a member of the church, a believer, in whom the word of God has taken flesh, would be led by the spirit of God. The spirit of God is the same but works differently in various individuals without contradiction; the spirit of God is not an industrial machine that makes its products look alike. The spirit encourages individual creativity and originality and assures a unity in the plurality. Unity in plurality is not the fruit of human effort but the works of the spirit of God; the church, like the kingdom of heaven, should

be a house of differences united by the spirit of God and not through any human interest or intelligence. The church should serve the interest of no one but God alone; like the spirit of God, the works of the church should be particularised and externalized but not the church herself.

The individuals in whom the word of God has taken flesh and who were led by the spirit of God come together in the power of the spirit to form a community. Acts of the Apostles illustrates clearly the growth and formation of such communities. The individuals in the communities were said to be one (Acts 4,32), because each and every one of them was led by the spirit of Christ who prayed that they might be one (Joh.17,22-23). A community which should be identified by the love they have for one another (Joh.13, 34-35) and their trust in the spirit of their master (Lk.12,11-12) which dwells among them (Joh.16,13-15). A spirit which does not subdue the spirit of man himself but gives man the opportunity to direct one's human spirit to fall in line with the spirit of Christ, the ideal spirit. There are indications that not all believers succeeded in unifying their human spirit with that of Christ as the example of Ananias and his wife Sapphira indicates (Act 5,1-11).

Remarkable of these communities is their ability to transcend all barriers be they social, cultural, religious or ethnic, a fact that is symbolically expressed by their language which was understood by every listener (Acts2,5-12). The word was preached to all people irrespective of their place in the society and the spirit abode in all who welcomed him (Acts 8,14-17; 26-40; 10,34-48; 15, 22-29). Also remarkable is their single-mindedness of speaking the word, namely, making all followers of Christ (Mt.28,18-20; Acts 2, 37-42; 9,15; 16,31-34; Rom.1,14-15). Both preachers and believers are in a way servants of Jesus Christ, instruments in the hand of God, workers of Christ and God's own building and field (1Cor.3,5-23).

Certainly, the aim of Christs teaching and works as well as that of his disciples and believers is to establish the kingdom of God on earth, to hand over to God the hearts of men, that is to say, to convert people to God, to bring material and spiritual salvation

to mankind. Jesus and his followers preached the kingdom of God which is already at hand (Mt.4,17; 10,7-8) and urged the people to repent so that they could enter into the kingdom of God, the kingdom which is already in the midst of men (Lk.17,20-21) " the kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed; nor would they say, lo here it is! or there! for behold the kingdom of God is in the midst of you". The kingdom of God has its seat in the hearts of men and can only be observed through the works of those in whom the kingdom has already come to stay. In order to indicate the presence of the kingdom among men, Christ said, "from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and men of violence take it by force" (Mt.11,12). Jesus made clear the work of those already in the kingdom, what they should do and this he did by making quite clear the aim of his mission in these words: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord " (Lk.4,18-19). Christ came to liberate man from the tyranny of nature, from man's fellow men, from man himself and from ignorance. He did these through his words and works through which he gave his listeners a new self-consciousness by making them aware of the presence of God in them and his unending love for all, especially for the rejected and oppressed. Man's liberation can only take place through man's awareness of God's presence in him no matter one's state of life, an awareness which should be followed by one's willingness to do the will of God (following the teachings of Christ) and by seeing oneself as an instrument in the hands of God.

God's kingdom is made up of such people whose will is in union with God's, people like Christ in whom God reveals Himself further and through whom God continues His works of creation, namely, converting people to God and reconciling all things with Him. The early Christian communities were made up of people of this consciousness and aspiration (Acts 4,19-20; 2,37-42; 5,28-32; Rom.6,16-19; 8,1-17; Gal.4,8-10); they saw themselves as the new people of God, people who were not bound together by laws but by submission to the spirit of God

which they had received.

The early Christian communities were distinguished by two main characteristics, namely, their unwavering determination to do the will of God alone, made known through the spirit they had received, and their preference for the guidance of the spirit of Christ over the precepts of the law. The spirit is above the law, a submission of the spirit under the law would be tantamount to a submission of the spirit. The only law the spirit knows is love. We shall next come to see how the apostolic fathers viewed this kingdom of God that begins on earth.

5.1,1 The Apostolic Fathers. These were mainly immediate followers and disciples of the apostles whose letters were highly regarded and were seen as an elucidation and confirmation of the oral sermons. The letters reveal the state of the church after the apostles; the Christians saw their earthly life as a preparation for the eternal life after death in God's kingdom. The letters also show how the doctrine of Christ's Godhead was generally being accepted as an undisputable matter of faith. Bishops' and priests' offices were emphasised and ethnics were gradually being codified as laws. ¹ As such, these letters were less systematic than the theology of Paul or that of the Church Fathers, the letters were simple to understand and conveyed the deep religious faith of their writers and were void of Greek philosophical expression and rhetoric. These letters were addressed mainly to the persecuted Christians in the Greek and Roman world, admonishing them to remain steadfast in faith.

The Didache which together with the letters of 1st. and 2nd. Clemens, Hermas and Barnabas was held until the 4th and 5th century to be holy writing, sees the NT as a fulfillment of the OT's history of salvation and a reference to the coming perfection. In Christ is the unity of the OT law and the gospel. The Didache admonishes its hearers: "And do not pray as the hypocrites, but as the Lord commanded in his Gospel, pray thus: Our Father, who art in Heaven, hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come ". ²

1. Reclams Bibel Lexikon. a.a.O. p. 43

2. T.E.Page. The Apostolic Fathers.I, (with an English translation by Kirsopp Lake) London 1948, line 8.2

Words which indicate, according to the opinion of the writer of the Didache, the wish of Christ to demarcate the Jewish virtues from those of the Christians as well as the new order and a new race of God's people, a kingdom that would soon come to be. Christ's church is universal in that the members are made up of people from all corners of the earth. The church does not only possess the necessities of salvation, life, faith, immortality and knowledge but also is herself a salvation community.³ According to the Didache, the church is in the coming, an eschatological reality whose fulfillment is yet to come because the members are still being gathered from all parts of the world; "As this broken bread was scattered upon the mountains, but was brought together and became one, so let thy church be gathered together from the ends of the earth into thy kingdom".⁴ A text which not only indicates the missionary duty of the church and of the Christians but also sees the Christians as a chosen people, for Christ is the king of all peoples including the pagans.⁵

The epistle of Barnabas devalues the importance of the OT; the church alone is the chosen people of God to whom the promise made in the OT covenant refers to Christ as the king who subdued all other kings that were ruling before him.⁵ The Christians therefore should always be alert lest they should be thrown out of the kingdom by the wicked ruler who was thrown out by Christ.⁷ Barnabas epistle see the kingdom of God as a kingdom apart from the church which is seen as a preparation place for the kingdom of God. The epistle portrays the kingdom of God as a place of reward after the earthly life.⁸

First epistle of Clement describes the offices of bishops and deacons as offices which have their origin in God.⁹

3. Ibid., 9.3

4. Ibid., 9.3; 9.4

5. Ibid., 10.5; 14.3

6. Ibid., 4.4

7. Ibid., 4, 13

8. Ibid., 21.1

9. Ibid., 42. 1-4

The epistle admonishes the Christians to be obedient to the state because the worldly rulers have their authority from God. Christians ought to pray for their earthly rulers.¹⁰ The second epistle of Clement prepares its hearers for the kingdom of God which would come into being after death. Christians should not be afraid to die, to shed their blood for Christ. It names love and justice as the conditions for the entrance into the kingdom of God, and urges its listeners, "Let us then wait for the kingdom of God, from hour to hour, in love and righteousness When you do this, he says, the kingdom of my Father will come".¹¹ The theology of second Clement in a way differs from the theology of other apostolic Fathers who wrote on the kingdom of God and its relationship with the church in that it not only sees the kingdom of God at the disposal of everyone who practises love and justice but as a state of life which could be realised here on earth.

The epistle of Ignatius of Antioch sees the kingdom of God as a place where people would be rewarded for their good deeds; it urges Christians to be good so that they might enter into the kingdom of God. One has the impression that the writer of the epistle was encouraging the Christians to despise all earthly honour and glory and seemed also to have glorified martyrdom.¹²

The Shepherd of Hermas emphasises the conditions under which one could enter into the kingdom of God. It numbers the conditions saying, "The first is Faith, the second is Temperance, the third is Power, the fourth is Long-suffering, and the others who stand between them have these names: - Simplicity, Guilelessness, Holiness, Joyfulness, Truth, Understanding, Concord, Love. He who bears these names and the name of the Son of God, shall be able to enter into the Kingdom of God".¹³

The epistle of St. Polycarp of Smyrna to the Christian community in Philippi encourages the persecuted and suffering Christians to avoid

10. Ibid., 60. 4-6 1.1

11. Ibid., 5.5; 9.6; 11.7; 12.1; 12.2; 12.6

12. Ibid., 6.1; 16.1; 19.3

13. Ibid., II Sim.IX 15.2; 92.2

all practices that would hinder them from entering into the kingdom of God. ¹⁴

Definitely, as persecuted people and as a minority, influenced by the Jewish sense of separatedness, the Christian writers of this period after the apostles saw themselves as not belonging to the world. God's kingdom was the end point of their earthly journey; the church was seen as a gathering of those preparing themselves for the kingdom of God. God's kingdom which begins on earth and for which they like their master were dying for was not emphasised in the letters. The ultimate purpose of a Christian life is not to go to heaven but to establish God's kingdom on earth. We shall next see the way the church Fathers handled this topic.

5.1,2 THE CHURCH FATHERS AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The church Fathers were the ancient writers of the church who in their various times and places sought the unity of the faith and the community of the church; men characterised by their authentic teachings, their holy lives, their general acceptance by the church, and moreover they lived before the end of the 8th.cen. ¹⁵, and were called church Fathers because they taught with all convictions and holiness, that which they learnt from the church. ¹⁶

Among them were the four greatest ancient theologians of the West, Sts. Ambrose, Hieronymus, Augustine, and Gregory the great and the ecumenical teachers of the East, namely, Basil, Gregory of Nyssa and John Chrysostom. Origen, one of the most outstanding, is often not regarded as one of the greatest and not even as a church Father because he was condemned in 553 as a heretic by the Synod of Constantinople. ¹⁷ The church Fathers saw themselves as transmitters of the apostolic teachings and traditions. As leaders of their various communities, they found themselves bound to defend the correct teachings of the apostles and the gospel teachings. Their authority to a

14. Ibid., I 2.3; 5.3

15. Karl Rahner, Herbert Vorgrimler. Kleines Theo.Wörterbuch. 1976, p. 237

16. Johannes Feiner, Magnus Lührer. Mysterium Salutis, Bd 4/1, Das Heilsgeschehen in der Gemeinde, Köln 1972, p. 433

17. Karl Bihlmeyer, Hermann Tüchle. Kirchengeschichte Bd. I, München 1982, p. 190

very large extent rested on the infallibility of the church with which they identified themselves. By virtue of their good knowledge of the holy bible, the profane sciences, their human experiences and the Holy spirit which they believed was leading them, they made the revelation of God actual to the Faithful of their time. As the eyes of the church and as men who felt constantly the pulse of the body of Christ, they were compelled to teach the Faithful, ward off heretics and expound the teachings of the church.¹⁸ They engaged themselves not only with the actual problems of the church but also with the possible future problems of the church.

Undoubtedly, the problem of the kingdom of God, its fulfillment and time of coming occupied their mind and of course its relationship with the church, the body of Christ.

The church Fathers based their teachings on the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God or of Christ and on the prayer of the Lord. Their teaching serves as an answer to the problems at hand and reflects the actual situation of the community or church.

In a letter from St. Jerome, whose letters comprise of the most important collections of epistles in all ancient latin literature,¹⁹ he advised a woman named Eustochium on the virtues of virginity. He spoke of a religious community called the Cenobites, who after listening to their preacher, approved of his teaching by weeping. At the moment the preacher spoke of the kingdom of Christ, their future blessedness and the glory to come, all began to sign gently and to lift up their eyes to heaven and said to themselves "who will give me wings like a dove, and I will fly and be at rest".²⁰ Undoubtedly, St. Jerome was advising Eustochium, whom he addresses as a lady, to follow the good example of the life and aspirations of the Cenobites, who dedicated themselves to God, despised the things of the world and were longing for the things of heaven, the kingdom of Christ. In other words, they were dead to the world; the world was not their home, they were only passing by. For people with

18. Johannes Feiner, Magnus Löhrer. *Mysterium Salutis. Die Grundlagen heilsgeschichtlicher Dogmatik.* Bd1, Köln 1965, pp.595, 596

19. St. Jerome. *The Letters of St. Jerome.* translated by Charles Christopher Mierow. Vol. I, London 1963, p. 3

20. *Ibid.*, pp. 170-171

such ideas, the church or community is a place for preparation for the forthcoming kingdom of God, a place or a community which is day in and day out awaiting the call of the Lord.

St. John Chrysostom in his baptismal instructions advised his hearers to keep their baptismal covenant with Christ, renounce the devil, have confidence in Christ and be faithful to their call and to the grace of God in them so that they would with abundant glory meet the king of heaven and be judged worthy to be taken up into the clouds, i.e., into the kingdom of heaven. One sees that St. John Chrysostom believed that baptism was a contract with God whereby one had to keep certain promises in order not to go to hell or lose the kingdom of God. The justice of God is seen in his being able to reward all who fought bravely against his enemy, the Satan. The world is seen as the kingdom of Satan in spite of the death and resurrection of Christ, and his works which we are expected through baptism to carry on. The Faithful had to keep their covenant with God through baptism so that they would enter into the kingdom of God, a place where God has his throne. ²¹ According to St. John Chrysostom, those who believe in God, the Christians, who are called the faithful, receive as a trust from God justification, sanctity, purity of soul, filial adoption and the kingdom of heaven. ²² One therefore has to be faithful to God, do good works so that one might enter into the kingdom of God, as if the only new thing Christ brought to the world was baptism. Good works and faithfulness to God existed even before Christ came.

St. Augustine of Hippo, one of the most famous and influential church Fathers of the Western church (354-430). He was the intellectual leader of the middle ages until the time of St. Thomas Aquinas and was as well the last thinker of the ancient Christian culture of the Western church. Among his areas of interest (theological) and dedication, was the illustration of the church as an institute of salvation. ²³

21. St. John Chrysostom. Baptismal Instructions, transl. by Paul W. Harkins, London 1963, p. 172

22. Ibid., p. 175

23. Karl Bihlmeyer, Hermann Tüchle a.a.O., pp. 420 f

St. Augustine saw the emperical church as the "regnum Dei", the "civitas Dei", the kingdom of God. ²⁴ For him the civitas Dei contrasted with the civitas terrena, the kingdom of the earth, the kingdom of community (societas) of the ungodly and the rejected. The church is the body of Christ, the house, the temple, and the city of God; the church is as well the " numerus electorum " the elected number, ²⁵ the community of believers through whom Christ ruled. ²⁶

In St. Augustine's treatise on Faith, hope and charity, written around 420-423 AD at the request of a certain Laurentius; commenting on the Lord's prayer according to St. Matthew, says that the Lords prayer is made up of 7 petitions and 3 requests. These three requests namely "hallowed be thy name, thy kingdom come, thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven" are the things necessary for the attainment of the eternal life; these are the things to be retained forever. Things which increase in us as we progress in perfection, a state which we hope to attain in the other life, the everlasting life. ²⁷

Further, he describes the church as the sublime trinity, a church which includes that in heaven where there is no place for the wicked and where no flesh has fallen away nor will fall away; a church made up of the loyal angels of God. ²⁸ The church on earth comprises the faithful who praise the name of the Lord from the rising of the sun to the setting, a people who daily thank God for delivering them from the ancient captivity. On the other hand, the church in heaven which has always been loyal to God and did not experience the woes that come from the fall of Adam, renders help to the church on earth which is still in exile, and the two would come to be one in the fellowship of eternety, a oneness which is even now practised and anticipated in their bond of charity; the two churches were instituted for the mere purpose of worshipping God. ²⁹

24. Adolf von Harnack. Lehrbuch der Dogmengeschichte 3,
Darmstadt 1964, p. 150

25. Ibid., pp. 163, 164

26. Ibid., pp. 456, 151

27. St. Augustine. Faith, Hope and Charity. transl. by Louis A. Arand,
Maryland 1947, p. 107

28. Ibid., p. 60

29. Ibid., p. 59

St. Prosper of Aquitaine, a lay man from Southern Gaul and a faithful follower and an occasional correspondent of St. Augustine, the writer of the "De vocatione omnium Gentium", the first ancient Christian literature on the problem of the salvation of infidels, a work written in response to Semi-Pelagianism.³⁰

He stresses the universalism of God's will to save mankind including the gentiles who are called through grace into the kingdom of Christ.³¹ St. Prosper preached that men without light could go through grace and prayers into the kingdom of God before they die; God's will is the sole reason why grace is bestowed on any man no matter one's nation, race, state or age.³² The kingdom of Christ meant here is the church, where the gentiles who received faith through prayers and the grace of God become members of the body of Christ which will reach its perfection in the coming kingdom of Christ.

A more detailed account of the kingdom of God on earth and of that to come and of their relation to one another was given by two renowned Greek Fathers, namely, Origen and St. Gregory of Nyssa.

Origen. (185-254) was a student of St. Clement, and later became the most successful theological writer of the pre-Nicæan time, the most influential theologian of the Greek church and the most prominent in the whole church up to the time of St. Augustine. Origen was a pious man, an ascetic and mystic and a man who was out to serve the church with his whole strength, a man who spoke convincingly and deeply on the mystery of the Incarnation and of the forming of the Logos (word) in our human soul.³³

For Origen, the kingdom of God would not come with observation; no one would ever say it is here or there, for the kingdom of God is already within us, therefore praying for the kingdom of God to come would mean praying that the kingdom of God in oneself bear fruit and be perfected. These words come from his treatise on

30. St. Prosper of Aquitaine. The Call of all Nations. transl. by P. De Letter, London 1952, pp. 3, 5

31. Ibid., p. 125

32. Ibid., pp. 53, 63

33. Karl Bihlmeyer, Hermann Tüchle, a.a.O., pp. 190, 191

prayers composed around 233/234 as a reply to questions raised by his friend and patron St. Ambrose to whom with one Tatiana he dedicated the book (*De Oratone*).³⁴

Origen holds firm that anyone who is ruled by God and obedient to his spiritual laws dwells within himself as in a well-ordered city. He further went on to distinguish the kingdom of God from the kingdom of Christ. He says:

"by the kingdom of God, I believe, is meant the happy enthronement of reason and the rule of wise councils; and by the kingdom of Christ, the saving words that reach those who hear, and the accomplished works of justice and the other virtues. For the Son of God is Word and Justice!"³⁵

Every good man by nature belongs to the kingdom of God (natural theology) where there is a place even for the gentiles.

The kingdom of Christ stays at the disposal of every one who believes in the word and acts accordingly, in other words, the kingdom of Christ is built on the kingdom of God. Origen holds that the kingdom of God will be perfecting itself in us if we constantly endeavour in prayers for knowledge and wisdom, the perfection of which would mean the contemplation of the spiritual face to face, i.e., the full restoration of the kingdom of God. There all are reconciled to God; Christ, then, having subdued all enemies, will bring all into the kingdom of the Father, so that God may be all in all.³⁶ He emphasised to his readers the need to pray that the will of God be done on earth as it is done in heaven, and this would happen if we obey the will of God; if we do the will of God always, we shall be like those already in heaven who bear the image of the heavenly one. We shall then inherit the kingdom of heaven and the coming generation would pray to be like us when we are in heaven.³⁷ If the will of God is done on earth as it is done in heaven, earth will remain earth no longer and sin will be banished; we shall all then be in heaven. For "he who does the will of God and does not disobey His saving and spiritual laws, is in heaven."³⁸

34. Origen. *Prayer: Exhortation to Martyrdom*. transl. by John J.O. Mearns London 1954, pp. 84,8

35. *Ibid.*, p. 85

36. *Ibid.*, p. 86

37. *Ibid.*, p. 86

38. *Ibid.*, p. 91

Origen gives us contemplative insight into the life and hopes of a Christian and his attitude towards life and God. Heaven and earth are not completely separated from one another, rather the earth is a heaven in potency. A Christian prays that earth may turn into the hands of God where his will alone would be done. The earth belongs to God, it is the imperfect kingdom of God and of his Christ, a good example of which is the church of Christ on earth, which prays that the will of God may be done on earth as it is done in heaven.

St. Gregory of Nyssa. St. Gregory, a Greek Father, wrote an exegetical treatise on the Lord's prayer. Unlike earlier writers on the Lord's prayer, he did not see in the kingdom of God the definite religious entity proclaimed in the gospel but rather he speculates on the concept of the kingdom of God. For him, God is already the king of the universe. God's kingdom on earth is the greatest of all earthly kingdoms, a kingdom that is to be established everywhere, especially in morality. He says:

"the kingdom of God among men can be initiated only by means of a relentless warfare on the battlefield of the soul. The perfect dominion of God will not be achieved until sin and death have been overcome, in a holy alliance between God and the soul".³⁹

Just as the beatific vision is the highest object and purpose of life in heaven, St. Gregory therefore holds that we also are supposed to make efforts to increase our knowledge of God. In other words, the kingdom of God on earth comprises men with inadequate knowledge of God but who are striving to perfect this knowledge which will definitely reach its perfection when we will be privileged to see God face to face. Since man's soul is created in the image of God and is meant to reflect God but unfortunately the soul is impeded by sin, it can no longer reflect God and therefore has to be cleansed of sins in order to reflect God.⁴⁰

Virtues lead to sanctity and establish in one the kingdom of God and the image of God; this implies being empty of all but God and at the

39. St. Gregory of Nyssa. The Lords Prayer: The Beatitudes. transl. by Hilda C. Graef, London 1954, p. 11

40. Ibid., pp. 16, 17

same time fixing one's mind on immaterial and spiritual things so that God, who is purity, immortality, light and truth, may fill one's soul. ⁴¹

Asking or praying for the kingdom of God to come does not mean that God is not yet king or can become anything other than what he already is, but it means to be free from the tyranny of death and our passions which lead us to sin. ⁴²

From all we have seen, the teachings of the apostolic Fathers to a large extent differ from that of the church Fathers, not only due to their intellectual differences and spirituality but also due to the situation of the church and Christians of their time, situations which greatly influenced their interpretation of the bible and of the kingdom of God.

For most of the apostolic Fathers, the kingdom of God is yet to come; God has not yet taken control of world affairs and that's why the Christians are suffering in the hands of the enemies of God. These sufferings and the eventual martyrdom are the prerequisites for the coming kingdom of God in the other world. Christ suffered persecution, humiliation and death because his kingdom is not of this world, so also do his followers suffer because they are not of this world. The church is seen as a sort of preparatory class for the coming kingdom of God. The church and the Christians do not belong to this world.

On the other hand, most church Fathers saw the kingdom of God of Christ as already established on earth. The rule of Christ, has already been inaugurated, a kingdom on earth which when compared with the eschatological kingdom of God is still very imperfect. The kingdom of God on earth is in becoming; the Fathers seem to have believed that the purpose of a Christian life on earth is to fight for the reign of God on earth by doing the will of God and being free from passions and sin. Their spirituality and authority demonstrate not only a deep knowledge of the bible but also the freedom enjoyed by the church of their time. Consequently, the church was seen not only as God's people, the new Israel, but also as a symbol of the presence and

41. Ibid., p. 18

42. Ibid., p. 51

reign of God on earth, a kingdom of God instituted through the life, teachings, sufferings, persecution, death and resurrection of Christ, the Lord of the new community.

Since the church understands herself as the realisation of the community of believers anticipated by Christ, instituted in order to continue Christ's work of salvation among men,⁴³ the church therefore has to have an adequate knowledge of man as an individual with whom God personally communicates through his spirit in the faithful and in every individual. We therefore ask ourselves, what is man, who needs to belong to the church in order to be saved?

5.2.1 MAN AS AN OBJECT OF REFLECTION

" Each man is to a certain extent

- a) like every other man
- b) like certain other men
- c) like no other man "

(Kluckhohn and Murray)

The problem of the individual arises mainly from the very fact that the individual is often neglected in the treatment of and reflection on the community, group and state. It is so because the individual is to a large extent like every other man in the group or community, in one way or the other like particular other men; but it is often neglected that he is to a certain extent like no other man. Inasmuch as man as an individual belongs to the human race, to the genus man and also belongs to or shares some peculiarities with certain people, which to some extent distinguishes this group or community from every other group or community, man as an individual does not lose or forfeit his individuality or uniqueness even though this fact is at times overlooked by the community or authorities.

A man's personal experiences, history and knowledge make him quite unlike every other man; since there cannot be any two persons with the same totality of experiences, natural endowment, history and

43. Josef Neuner, Heinrich Roos. Der Glaube der Kirche.

Regensburg 1971, p. 250

knowledge, one may therefore say that man was created to be unique and irreplaceable. These facts not only make individuals but determine to a large extent their actions, behaviour and relationship with God and with one another. Man's individuality, uniqueness and irreplaceability make him neither greater nor smaller than any other person because there is no one with identical qualities with him with whom he could compare.

Man is therefore by nature not only free but autonomous; he thus endeavours to act freely and autonomously. Since man is by nature a social being, he is therefore classified together with every other person in the society which eventually moderates his freedom and autonomy. This is done through the use of conscience which the society renders to the individual. Through inter-societal communication, the individual's freedom and autonomy are further moderated, and his conscience elaborated but he does not in spite of that lose his individuality. What is man, who always endeavours to maintain his freedom and seeks to fulfill himself?

5.2,2

MAN AS AN OBJECT OF PSYCHOLOGY

Man as an individual is undivisible and intrinsic, his undivided nature makes him unique and independent, and is comprised of two natures, the instinctive and the intellectual nature. As an instinctive and the intellectual nature. As an instinctive being, he shares the same nature with other animals and as an intellectual being he participates in the immaterial such as values and ideas; in other words, he transcends the immediate nature including his very self, and strives to a personality with which he would like to be identified. He is no longer satisfied with being identified as a mere person (every man is by nature a person, an individual) but becomes a personality the moment he is intellectually formed and strives at values outside the animal world, ⁴⁴ a process that has neither end nor dimension. Psychologists are divided in their opinion on what man is comprised of. A group which represents phenomenological and

44. Heinz Rempelen. Psychologie der Persönlichkeit. a.a.O., pp.32, 34, 36

humanistic ideas and values propound theories which, contrary to the representatives of a natural scientific approach, hold that man as an individual is unique, with a free will, a conscious intelligible being whose being could only be explained through the help of complex and dynamic models. On the other hand, the supporters of a natural, scientific, pragmatic and empirical approach, work on the premise that man is homogenous, determinable, instinctive and his personality could be comprehended through objective and standardized methods. For them, man is a mere instinctive being, an organism which could be operated from outside; irrational like every other animal, a being which responds to stimulus from outside and is therefore not free. ⁴⁵

In general, the psychologists take the existence and the beingness of man as such for granted, thus, they occupy themselves with the characteristics of man, his nature and behaviour. Nevertheless, psychological findings throw light onto the being of man; the two schools of thought already mentioned apparently contradict one another but in reality they complement one another. For man is free and at the same time determined, intellegible and instinctive; homogenous and at the same time unique; independent but dependent and manipulable. Man is the undefinable, a mystery.

In spite of the apparent differences and contradictions in an individual, differences and contradictions between the conscious and the unconscious, ⁴⁶ man as an individual strives for a self-identity by unifying apponents. This unity is expressed in one's identity and in one's articulation and expression of meaning. Invariably, the self-identity expresses itself at a given time as the synthesis of various experiences and thereby guarantees the continuity of the life-historical-chain amidst psychic occurrences and eventually serves as a help in overcoming all of mans fear's and degeneration. Just as the self-identity expresses itself in the unity of an individual's life-history and thereby creates a "vertical" consistence of a life's historical coherence, so also does the social life activity complement

45. Lawrence A. Pervin. Persönlichkeits Theorien. München 1981, pp.22 ff

46. Frieda Fordham. Eine Einführung in die Psychologie C.G.Jungs, Stuttgart 1959, p. 97

and guarantee through the inter-subjectivity, which is a horizontal level of communication, the identity realization of the individual in a community or group.⁴⁷ Such individuals make up every community, society or group; no matter in which community or group in which the individual finds himself, he always maintains his centre point in himself.⁴⁸

Self-identity is the nucleus of an individual personality which no serious and successful system of education or religion could do without. All experiences and knowledge of self, society or environment help in strengthening the self-identity no matter how contradictory the experience or knowledge may be. A society or community has a large role to play in building up and strengthening the individual's self-identity. The church as a community is obliged not necessarily to homogenize all individual identities in order to come to a community or group identity but to further the integration of the community aspiration in the already won self-identity. Faithful is then one who successfully assimilates the qualities of Christ propagated by the church and thereby identifying oneself with Christ. With Christ as the ideal self, the individual begins a process of socialization and identification. In addition one evaluates oneself by constantly measuring oneself with the ideal self. One could then say that a normal self or I-identity rests on those self-representations which are related harmoniously to the whole self and which do not conflict with a corresponding representation in the self-ideal.⁴⁹ In the case of Christians or a Faithful, Christ is not only the self-ideal but also the source of a "culture" or lifestyle of the individual Christian. Such "culture" serves as a mutual relationship between individuals and the community or church, a sort of harmony between individual ego and the super ego (Christ and his church), a harmony which creates a conscience, which should be said to be a negative conscience when the individual ego lives in disharmony with the culture or super ego.⁵⁰ Many psychologists see a need for an I-identity based on a cultural identity which would in turn promote a psychosocial

47. Jürgen Habermas. Erkenntnis u. Interesse, Frankfurt 1969, p.193f, 199f

48. Wilhelm Dilthey, Gesammelte Schriften, VII, Stuttgart 1958, p.154

49. David Joel De Levita. The Concept of Identity, Den Haag 1963, p.412

50. Erik Erikson. Der junge Mann Luther, München 1964, p.215 f

balance. Erikson expresses this idea in this way:

" But wherever this sense is lost (i.e., the sense of identity based on the experience of social health and cultural solidarity), wherever intergrity yields to despair and disgust, wherever generativity yields to stagnation, intimacy to isolation, and identity to confusion, an array of associated infantile fears are apt to become mobilized; for only an identity safely anchored in the patrimony' of a cultural identity can lead to a workable psychosocial equilibrium". 51

For a believer, Christ and his church (culture) are the way by which man could find meaning and guidance for his actions. This way of life, culture, becomes not only a possession, an ideal and a theoretical standard, a theory of life 52 but the life itself which is to be lived, thus has no alternative. Although the psychologists can not say exactly what man is, nevertheless they give a clue to his behaviour and self-development and integrity.

5.2,3 MAN AS AN OBJECT OF PHILOSOPHICAL REFLECTION

Man as an individual can only realise and fulfill himself by stepping outside himself, in other words, man is a transcendence who transcends himself in order to realise his essence, thereby opening himself to the Truth, the Good and the Beautiful.

It all means that man can only be understood by comprehending the nature and being of the object of his transcendency. On the other hand, a man like John Locke supposes that the human mind is like a white paper, void of all characters, a tabula rasa, on which experiences have to be registered. Experience consists of a sensation which gives us information about the outside world, reflection gives us the knowledge we have about the inner situation of the mind. 53 Such a philosophy assumes that man is made up of his experiences and the sensation and stimulus he receives from outside. Man would therefore react

51. Erik Erikson. Childhood and Society. NY.1963, p. 412

52. T.H.Huxley. Science and Education. London 1905, p. 143

53. D.J.O Connor. A Critical History of Western Philosophy
a.a.O., p. 207

according to the information he receives from outside, which of course as raw material has to be analysed and reassembled by the mind before it becomes knowledge. Situation therefore determines to a large extent the behaviour of the individual.

For Leibniz the human mind is like a Monad, a simple substance without parts and without windows through which anything could come in or go out. True unity belongs to each Monad for each is one in that each is independent and the centre of activity. Monads differ from one another in the degree in which they possess energy, the essential property of the Monads. None of the Monads is entirely without force or energy and none is entirely without passivity except the chief Monad, which Leibniz calls God. Monads can be destroyed through annihilation and come into being through creation, ⁵⁴ in other words, Monads are some sort of organism which are self-reliant and are determined by the amount of innate energy or force they possess.

Interpreting such a philosophy psychologically, one could say that an individual, a Monad, determined by the degree of energy it has, is like an organism controlled by his instinct, a part of his nature. These two interpretation (philosophies) fall in line with the two main schools of psychology, namely, the behaviourists (Locke) and the existentialists (Leibniz). ⁵⁵

According to Kant, man is the only being on earth whose causality is teleological; he is a being who acts purposely, guided to his teleological end by laws which are in themselves unlimited and independent of natural conditions, but are necessities as far as man himself is concerned. The only natural being with ideas of freedom, the laws of causality and reason. A moral being by virtue of his reasonableness; a being which should not be asked why he exists because his nature possesses the highest good (end); he is the purpose of creation and the subject of morality. ⁵⁶

Kant believes that the will of man, a rational being, is subject to the categorical imperative; the moral law; the motivating force

54. Ibid., pp. 222 ff

55. Lawrence A. Pervin. *Persönlichkeits Theorien*. a.a.O., p. 27

56. Immanuel Kant. *Kritik der Urteilstkraft*. hrsg. Wilhelm Weischedel, Frankfurt 1981, p. 394 f

of the pure reasoning and human behaviour.⁵⁷

Pure reason is in itself alone practical, it gives one the general law which we call moral laws.⁵⁸ We see that ratio (reason) is for Kant what instinct is for natural science psychologists (e.g.Freud), and what seems to bring them even nearer to one another is the concept of man as a some sort of determined being, by Kant through what he calls "the imperative necessities" and by Freud through human natural instincts.⁵⁹ Surely both reason and instinct are necessary and essential human properties, neither can any of them function adequately without the other nor are the two the only essential properties which a man needs in order to be effective or to be a man.

Hegel sees man as a being which can only be what he is supposed to be when the relationship with the absolute is guaranteed, for the whole reality is the reality of the absolute,⁶⁰ although every man is free and as a personality man is the unity of himself. As an individual, man receives his dignity as the bearer and realizer of the spirit.⁶¹ Hegel sees man's relationship with God in man's ability to think; man as a thinker does not only resemble God, but rather it is God himself who in thinking, appears in human consciousness. Thinking is man's highest quality, the root of the spirit, through which the absolute reveals himself and through which man comes to his own consciousness.⁶² Man, as an organ of the self-revelation of the absolute, can only gain consciousness through the self-manifestation of the absolute. Hegel further went on to say that man's being and God's being are the same;⁶³ and that the object of theology and philosophy is the same, namely, God.⁶⁴ In other words, what man is and what he could be or should be depends much on one's relationship with God. According to Jasper, human freedom is the source of human action and consciousness and the same freedom gives man the consciousness of man's finiteness, a consciousness he acquires through his relationship with the infinite.⁶⁵

57. Immanuel Kant.Kritik der Praktischen Vernunft.hrsg.Raymund Schmidt, Wiesbaden 1928, pp. 114, 124

58. Ibid., p. 44

59. Sigmund Freud. Abriß der Psychoanalyse, Hamburg 1977, pp.11,12

60. G.W.F.Hegel.Wissenschaft der Logik II,Wk.6,Frankf.1969, p.201 f

61. Annelise Redlich.Die Hegelsche Logik als Selbsterfassung der Persönlichkeit. Meisheim am Glan 1971, p.33

62. Ibid., pp. 29-31

63. G.W.F.Hegel.Begriff der Religion,Lassan, Bd.12/1, p.86

64. Ibid., p. 40

65. Karl Jaspers.Der Philosophische Glaube, Hamburg 1958, p.56 f

Among some Christian thinkers who identified the essence and the purpose of human life with God and Christ is Pascal, who holds that man becomes a man when he abides in union with the God of grace; grace makes man different from animals. ⁶⁶

For Pascal, Christ is the key to the understanding of the nature of man; Christ is the aim and nucleus towards which all things strive. Anyone who knows him, knows the fundament of all things, We come to understand ourselves and one another through Christ; through him we know what life and death is; without him we would not know what our life or our death or God. ⁶⁷

From all we have seen, many philosophers admit the spiritual, intellectual and supernatural nature of man, attributes which makes it difficult to have man as an object of our knowledge, a being which cannot be understood without reference to the infinite.

5.2,4

MAN AS AN OBJECT OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION

A theologian who reflects on man, reflects at the same time on himself and his beingness; he experiences his dependence on God his creator but cannot say for certain what he is because he was not present when God decided to make him. One can only give assent to the words of the psalmist who said:

"Thou knowest me right well;

my frame was not hidden from thee, when I was being made
in secret, intricately wrought in the depths of the
earth. Thy eyes beheld my unformed substance; in thy
book were written, every one of them, the days that were
formed for me, when as yet there was none of them.

How precious to me are thy thoughts, O God! How vast is
the sum of them! If I would count them, they are more
than the sand. When I awake, I am still with thee."

(Ps.139, 14c-18)

The Psalmist started his theological reflection with a reflection on his own very being, who he is and what he is and discovers that

66. Arthur Rich. Pascals Bild vom Menschen, Zürich 1953, p.72

67. Ibid., p. 77

what and who he is can only be understood in connection with the idea of God. Every individual is in a particular way in union with God; he discovers God by being aware of himself as a receiver of something he never laboured nor paid for. He compares this attention and care with the attention and care he received from his parents as he was a child and exclaims:

"When I look at thy heavens, the work of thy fingers,
the moon and the stars which thou hast established;
what is man that thou art mindful of him, and the son
of man that thou dost care for him? Yet thou hast made
him little less than God, and dost crown him with glory
and honour. Thou hast given him dominion over the works
of thy hands; thou put all things under his feet,"
(Ps.8,3-6).

Man sees himself as a creature of love, a being born and brought up in love; sees himself as a debtor to love, to God, to parents and surroundings. He discovers God as the source and promoter of life and therefore decides to pay God back for his love by promoting life and becomes a being which promotes life in himself and in other beings; an agent of God.

God becomes for him a humanitarian God, a God who out of love seeks to make man more human, because God himself is the ideal human. God as a being who is in love with life and in particular human life expects man whom he made in his own image (Gen.1,27f) to think and act likewise. The incarnation of God, his taking human flesh is the most eloquent revelation of his love and humanity. He thus urges his followers to love one another as he has loved them, a sign by which all men shall know that they belong to God (Joh.13,34-35). We therefore see man as a debtor of Divine love. As a response to the love and as an attempt to pay back the love, he imitates the love of God, which promotes life which he created through love. Man finds out in the course of time that he falls short of expectation, that he does not always do the good he is expected to do; he finds himself often a divided man and in amazement exclaims:

" I do not understand my own actions. For I do not do
what I want, but I do the very thing I hate. Now if I
do what I do not want, I agree that the law is good.

So then it is no longer I that do it, but sin which dwells within me. For I know that nothing good dwells within me, that is, in my flesh. I can will what is right, but I cannot do it. For I do not do the good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do". (Rom.7,15-19)

This very fact arouses again the question, what is man, what type of being is he who is today good and the other day bad ? What type of being is he who is always aware of his sins without waiting for somebody to tell him that he has sinned ? What is it that makes him aware of his sins, seek forgiveness and reconciliation ? If such a being exists, he must be a being to whom man owes his whole existence or else he would not be aware of his sins or seek forgiveness, reconciliation and a renewed promise. Man is aware of his sins and shortcomings the moment he is aware of his ideal-self God, the object of his aspirations. That means, in order to understand man, one has to understand his ideal-self, the object of his aspirations. His ideal-self, God himself, is unchanging and immovable, unlike man who is always transcending himself, his natural and man-made barriers and is therefore difficult to locate, define and classify.

Since we have never seen God nor can we have adequate knowledge of him, he therefore remains, "He who is what He is" (Ex.3,14), and remains what he is in spite of our inadequate knowledge or ignorance of his being. God is for us a mystery. The fact that man has him as his ideal-self and makes an effort to be like him, strives for him, means that he is in one way or the other already like him (Gen.1,27), participates in his being and in the mystery which God himself is. Since man participates in God's nature which is itself a mystery, man is therefore to some extent a mystery; like God, undefinable and unfathomable. ⁶⁸

Even some pagan philosophers and theologians similarly assert not only the similarities between the gods and men but also man's effort to be like the gods. This effort or striving, is for many the purpose of life and the aim of good living. Julian, a Roman pagan

68. Karl-Heinz Weger. *Der Mensch vor dem Anspruch Gottes*, Köln 1981, p, 13

theologian and philosopher, said the following about man:

"He is a living being situated between two realities: he is mortal as an individual and immortal in his universality. Consequently, one and the same person is a mixture of mortal and immortal. If men are then to fulfill their destiny ... and have communion with the gods in the immortal world, they must conform themselves to the deities, and imitate in their daily lives the order the gods have organized among beings." 69

According to Julian, man participates already in the nature of the gods in as far as he is immortal. Being a mixture of mortal and immortal can also be said to be a mixture of good and bad. Man has the gods as his ideal ego, and in order to be like them he therefore has to follow in their foot-steps and strive to identify himself with them, which means that the immortal aspect of his nature has to control the mortal part. Such an imitation, according to Julian, would not be restricted to a man's personal relation with the gods alone but also with his fellow men. 70

In every culture, man is depicted as a being responsible and accountable for his deeds before what ever he has as his god, which is often depicted as a being outside and above the human genus; a being that is generally believed to be a supervisor of man's earthly activities, by the virtue of which he can reward or punish. On this account, man's actions and behaviour is in a very unique way influenced by his deeds, experiences and the expected response of the gods or God.

Man as a creature of God is dependent on God; as an image of God, he is not a being that exists in itself or for itself but a being that owes its existence to the creative power of God. He is like a mirror that reflects the image of a man that stands before it, and would not reflect the image of the man without the man being present. So also man as an image of God would not exist either for or in himself without God whose image he is. 71

69. William J. Malley. *Hellenism And Christianity*. Roma 1978, p.80f

70. *Ibid.*, p. 84

71. Friedrich Gogarten. *Der Mensch zwischen Gott und Welt*.

Stuttgart 1956, p. 332

The very fact that he is the image of God means that one could speak in general terms of man; God is one and his image should also be one. On the other hand this universal image which particularises its self in individuals becomes multiple, variable and apparently different, different because of the various ways the individuals have attempted to resemble God and give account for nature which God has entrusted in their care.

Jesus Christ is seen as the original image of God and a model of original humanity, who demonstrates how man could achieve his self-fulfillment and humanity; Christ is the most perfected image of God, who through his union with the Father, God himself, established the real and most perfected image of God.

So also can man achieve the authentic humanity and image of God only through union with God. ⁷²

Jesus showed through his life and works that one could only achieve salvation by being human, promoting life, being oneself and at the same time submitting one's will to the will of God. That would mean that a good Christian can only be well understood by asking for his relationship with Christ, his ideal-self and about other ideal-selves that appeal to him. With these one sees how difficult it is to put all individuals under one roof. Christ is the principle ideal-self for a Christian, but cannot necessarily be the only ideal-self; the culture in which the individuals grow up and the community or organization in which the individuals belong provide ideal-selves to the members. It is then left to the individuals to subordinate all these ideal-selves under Christ, one's own principle ideal-self, a task which is in no way an easy one. Christ, the ideal-self of mankind, is the perfection of God's image and the humanity of mankind and therefore stands for mankind as a typical example of what man is supposed to be. When Christ therefore advises people to follow him, he only wants to point out to them that he is the only way through which man could be perfect, for he is the ideal-self of mankind, with whom every one should like to identify himself. ⁷³

72. Wolfhart Pannenberg. Glaube u. Wirklichkeit. München 1975, p.64

73. J. Feiner, M. Löhner. *Mysterium Salutis*. Bd. 2, Köln 1967, p. 817

For Rahner, man is the radical question to God, created by God and therefore obliged to get the answer from God. God gave man the answer to the question in himself, which man is by becoming man himself. God himself is the answer to the question what man himself is.⁷⁴ God revealed through his incarnation what exactly man is and what he is supposed to be. That means that what man actually is, can only be in the becoming; he is a being in the process of being a being which is in existence and not yet the being it is supposed to be. The idea of that which he is to be is in him but the means are outside him. He therefore has to constantly transcend himself, step out of himself, and demolish the barriers that kept him not only in prison and darkness but separated him from God whose image he is. Man therefore fulfills and realises himself by transcending himself and opening up himself to the Good, the Truth and the Beautiful.⁷⁵

In order to be able to transcend, to step out of oneself, one has to be in the first place aware of himself as the image of God, aware of himself as a being which is neither partly or a half animal nor an angel but a man; ⁷⁶ the bearer of a Godly mandate. The Godly mandate which every man bears is connected with the image of God which man himself is, and this mandate consists of his natural duty of reflecting back God, whose image he is. Man reflects God, first by being aware of the divine creative power in man, through which man was created, persists in existence and to continue the creative work, secondly, by being willing to subject oneself to the will of God, namely, that the image (man) and the object (God) remain in union; that the image may always identify itself with the object it stands for. Relying on the creative power of God in man, the spirit of God in man means confidence in God's purposefulness in creation and consequently confidence in oneself. The purpose of human life is to allow and make room for the creative power of God, the spirit of God in man to manifest God through the individual creativity and submission to the will of God. In this way every individual would be

75. Emerich Coreth. Was ist der Mensch ? München 1976, p. 196

76. Gerd Haeffner. Philosophische Anthropologie. Stuttgart 1982, p. 21

contributing to the establishment of the kingdom of God over man and on earth. 77 God dwells in his creatures, man finds Him in himself and in his neighbour; we have only to be conscious of His presence in us, have trust in Him, in His love and care, and nothing can ever separate man in whom He dwells from Him except man's own unconsciousness of His everlasting presence in man. 78

We have so far attempted to show how complicated and undefinable man is. Psychology as an empirical science concentrates on man as an animal, with habits, learned behaviour, instincts, predictable and determinable; produces results which could substantiate the philosophical idea of man as a rational being. No branch of science can say exactly what man is without first saying what God is, because God, whose image man is, is the cause of the transcendental nature of man, his capability of going beyond himself, thereby making it impossible to be located and defined like every other object of our knowledge. God came to the rescue of mankind by taking human flesh, thereby answering the question - What is man? Christ is the ideal man, the perfect man, the perfect image of God, the light and the way.

5.2,5

CHRIST AND THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Christ is the answer to human quest of God, what he is, who he is, and where he is; through his incarnation, mankind had for the first time in human history a close look at God, heard him speak so clear to every individual without the need of a mediator, taught people by the examples he laid down. Formally, he spoke through the prophets, his holy men, who eventually spoke to the people through the rulers; but through Christ, he spoke directly to every individual, sinners, rulers and social outcasts, and made his teachings more effective by doing what he taught. Christ is also the answer to the human quest of self, to the question - what is man, what is the purpose of his life and being. He revealed to man what man is and what his life

77. Rut Björkman. Das Ewige im Menschen. Freiburg i.B.1902, p.85

78. Ibid., pp. 41-43

means by becoming man himself, the most perfect man full of humility and humanity. Man according to him was created out of love, and lives and realises himself through love; a love which is distinguished from all other types of love in that it is in union with the creative, human-undeserving love of God, which he bestows on all without our meriting it. A love which knows no humiliation (God becoming man, like every one of us except as sinner); a love which perfects one's humanity and quest of human dignity and salvation. In other words, Christ summed up in himself the significance and destiny of mankind; he is not only a man but the Man, the natural inauguration of the final stage of the so-called human evolution.⁷⁹ The son of God became man so that we could become children of God, the free man became a servant so that we could become free. God's son became man in order to render to God the honour which we refused to give him, and identified himself in all aspects with man, especially with those who hear his words (Mt.10,40; Lk. 10,16).⁸⁰

Christ showed us that he is man like every one of us and that every one of us could equally do what he does provided we have faith; faith in the creative power of God within us under which we submit our wills and desires as Christ did. We therefore see Christ not necessarily as the redeemer but as the way which we all ought to follow, a way which leads into the kingdom of God. Jesus brought to mankind the good news that the kingdom of God is at hand. A statement which would undoubtedly console the oppressed, the exploited, the poor, the pious and the rejected and on the other hand would mean interference, confusion and a threat to those who were satisfied with the condition of things, because everybody believes that God is just, upright and has no favourite except the one who does his will. Jesus urged the people to repent and do penance for the kingdom of God is at hand; in other words he made his hearers aware of God's everlasting presence among mankind; "he is at hand, believe in the gospel and repent by doing his will". The kingdom of

79. G.Müller-Fahrenholz. Heilsgeschichte zwischen Ideologie und Prophetie. Freiburg 1974, p. 93

80. Edmund Schlink. Ökumenische Dogmatik. Göttingen 1983, p. 283

God is not necessarily an apocalyptical occurrence but something quite immediate, a kingdom that could be established immediately by a radical change of mind, mentality and trust in God, a reign of God's universal love for all mankind which would be initiated through repentance.⁶¹ As the way to the kingdom of God he did all he required from his followers, starting from baptism (a sign of one's entrance into the earthly kingdom of God) till his death on the cross (a sign of obedience to God, even when it would mean death) and eventually the resurrection (the coronation).

Christ was a typical example of a man in whom the kingdom of God has been instituted; he is the kingdom of God which is at hand. With words and deeds like the casting out of demons and his forgiveness of sins, he made it clear to his hearers that a new era had begun.⁶² What one needs to enter the kingdom of God, a kingdom that is open to the rich, the poor, the servants and masters, sinners and good men, gentiles and Jews is repentance. One need not change one's social stand or occupation in order to be eligible for the kingdom, but conversion of heart, which eliminates all forms of injustice, exploitation, oppression and hatred and instills love and confidence in God and one respect of human dignity and rights. Jesus was in the first place not after a mass or a societal revolution but individual conversion and repentance which would eventually mean a conversion and repentance of the society.⁶³ The kingdom of God would not uproot an individual nor would it demand from the individual to abandon what he has been doing and go out to encounter the kingdom of God outside, but rather the kingdom of God encounters, comes to the individual wherever the individual is. Man encounters the word and the kingdom which the word proclaims in one's own works of life and state, and he is converted with reference to one's situation and state of life. One discovers once more one's importance, dignity, and the immeasurable love and care of God, one becomes simple, conscious of the power of God in one, one regains real

61. Edward Schillebeeckx. *Erfahrung aus Glauben*. a.a.O., p. 154

62. Hansjon Berlier. *Das Ende der Zeit*. a.a.O. p. 40 f

63. Wilfried Pannenberg. *Die Bestimmung des Menschen*. a.a.O., pp. 23 ff

self-confidence and love of God and the neighbour, and fulfills the end of human life being perfect like one's heavenly Father. In like manner the word would not destroy a society but rather fulfill the end of a society, and that is the same end of the individual: a perfect society.

It is obvious that the good news of the coming of the kingdom constitutes the middle-point of the teaching of Christ who was called the Lord by his followers, indicating his authority and rulership over his people and the whole cosmos; all things have been put under his dominion.⁸⁴

The kingdom preached by Christ has not only a present dimension but also a future dimension, which means that the present kingdom on earth is not yet what it is supposed to be. The kingdom is a future which we at present are called attention to; it is a future expectation and a present proclamation.⁸⁵ The present points at the future and the future depends on the present; so is it with the kingdom of God on earth and its perfection in the future. The kingdom of God on earth is among those who like Jesus have dedicated themselves to do only the will of God, men whose daily bread is to do the will of God.

According to some theologians, the church cannot be designated as the kingdom of God on earth nor as the kingdom of God in becoming because the kingdom according to NT will be established at the end of time and will have a universal character,⁸⁶ a kingdom that has to be imposed on all works of God's creative power and love.

The church is the people of God, the faithful, who are in a way overwhelmed by the coming kingdom of God which is already at hand in the person of Jesus and is the estate of the coming kingdom of God on earth. She is a room created for the sake of the kingdom of God which is at hand;⁸⁷ her origin is the word proclaimed by Jesus and his command to his followers to proclaim to the world, that the kingdom of God is at hand. The church is not the kingdom of God but may

84. Leonhard Goppelt. *Christologie und Ethik*. a.a.O., p. 116

85. Hans Küng. *Die Kirche*. a.a.O., p. 75

86. *Ibid.*, p. 114

87. Heinrich Schlier. *Das Ende der Zeit*. a.a.O., p. 50

be rightly designated as the kingdom of the Son of Man on earth (Mt. 11,12f; 13,52; 16,28; 13,45-50; 20, 21),⁸⁸ an imperfect kingdom of the Son of Man; a kingdom which is not yet what it is meant to be, a community of the faithful who endeavour to unite their wills with that of God as Christ did. She is struggling at all times to maintain a union of will with God, a struggle which she carries on through her members' faith in Jesus, their model, who makes the church a stranger in the world and leads her through persecution.⁸⁹ Her ultimate aim is to help men become another Christ i.e., a friend of Christ (Joh.15,14-15).

For the church to meet this aim of making every individual another Christ, she has to learn to talk to and appeal to the individual consciences and freedom. She can do this not only by helping to build up individual consciences and freedom but also by respecting the cultural and non-religious characteristics of the individuals which make up every personality. In other words, the church has to learn to respect the uniqueness of every individual, characterised by his experience of God which influences the individual's understanding of another Christ. No one can be another Christ except one hears the word, believes in the word and is led by the spirit of Christ from whom the words come. It is the identification of oneself with the spirit of Christ, a union with the spirit that makes one another Christ. For the church to proclaim the word effectively, she has also to be led and be guided by the spirit of Christ who owns the words.

We therefore tend to consider the Holy Spirit as the most important element of the church and the individual identity and personality; the only human and ecclesiastical source of unity.

5.2,6

THE CHURCH AND THE HOLY SPIRIT

The church is a mystery and at the same time a human institution established according to the will of God. According to the Vat.II, "When the work which the Father had given the Son to do on earth (Joh.17.4) was accomplished, the Holy Spirit was sent on the day of

88. Johannes Feiner, Magnus Löhner. *Mysterium Salutis*. 8d4/1, p.113

89. *Ibid.*, p. 213

Pentecost in order that He might for ever sanctify the Church, and thus all believers would have access to the Father through Christ in the one Spirit (Eph.2,18)." 90

The Holy Spirit is the lifeblood of the church, sent to her in order that she may have a divine nature, origin, maintenance, and thus do the will of God, which is carrying on the same work Christ did on earth.

"He (Christ) poured out on His disciples the Spirit promised by the Father (Acts 2.33). The Church, consequently, equipped with the gifts of her Founder and faithfully guarding His precepts of charity, humility, and self-sacrifice, receives the mission to proclaim and to establish among all peoples the kingdom of Christ and of God. She becomes on earth the initial budding forth of that kingdom. While she slowly grows, the Church strains toward the consummation of the kingdom and, with all her strength, hopes and desires to be united in glory with her king." 91

The Holy Spirit is the gift of Christ, the founder of the church, the body-guard of the church as well as her weapon with which she has to fight and defend herself. To defend and fight for her Godly command to be charitable, humble and self-sacrificing whenever it is necessary; the same spirit mandates and guides the church in her evangelization, tells her what to say and what to do in every situation, to preach through words and actions the kingdom of God which is at hand. A kingdom which draws nearer as people continue to believe in Christ and be converted. As the church grows and strains towards the consummation of the kingdom so also does her knowledge of the will of Christ and the knowledge of God increase until she becomes one with Christ. The church as the people of God cannot imply that her members are the only people of God on earth; the church rather has to gather together the people of God scattered in the whole world. As an institution, the

90. The Documents of Vatican II, ed.Walter M.Abbott,London 1967, p.16f

91. Ibid., p. 18

church alone can not fulfill this assignment. The holy spirit which is independent of the church as a human institution (Acts 10,44-48; 2,39; Rom.2,25-29; 9,6; Gal.3,6; Col.2,17; Is.6,3ff; Am.9,7; Jeh.10, 7; 16,19; Is.44,24-28; 45,1-6; Dn.2,44; 7,13; Ps.2,8; Am.9,12) gathers also in various ways and at various times the people of God into the kingdom of God which is at hand. But the church is privileged to have a closer contact with God through Christ, the only son of God who took flesh and revealed to mankind the will of his Father, a revelation in which other people of God do not participate to the same extent. However, they are all in communion in the one spirit of God through whom they came to believe in God, and are therefore one. According to Vatican II:

"...among all the nations of the earth there is but one People of God, which takes its citizens from every race, making them citizens of a kingdom which is of a heavenly and not an earthly nature. For all the faithful scattered throughout the world are in communion with each other in the Holy Spirit". 92

Just as the church is the people of God so also are the people of God wherever they are in the world the church inasmuch as they are called to God through the spirit of God, which blows wherever he wishes. Man as an image of God is also in a particular way a child of God. The holy spirit gathers the children of God into the kingdom of God through the church or through other means the spirit might prepare.

According to the Vatican II:

"Those also can attain to everlasting salvation who through no fault of their own do not know the gospel of Christ or His Church, yet sincerely seek God and, moved by grace, strive by their deed to do His will as it is known to them through the dictates of the conscience". 93

The church as the community of the believers is universal and has no outside standard sign by which the members would be identified except

92. Ibid., p. 31

93. Ibid., p. 35

the spirit which moves them to follow the will of God.

On the other hand, the church is a visible concrete community and institution of the faithful, a community which lives in hope and love. A community with order and hierarchy, the visible body of Christ, the realization of the spoken word of God in our human community and in the world. This communal and societal aspect of the church serves the spirit of Christ, the spirit which keeps the body functioning and developing.⁹⁴ According to Ranner, the church is the community of the faithful and is in her totality the holy and the faithful.⁹⁵ The church is the societal community of the people of God, founded by Christ,⁹⁶ the church is seen as a community and an institution founded by Christ. She is the incarnation of the word of God in the world, in man and in the society, just as Christ himself is the incarnation of the word of God in human beings in general. The church should do in the community what the word of God does in the individual; just as the word of God converts and bestows upon the individual the spirit of Christ so also should the church convert the society to God and imbibe into the society the spirit of Christ. It all means that the church can only work effectively when her members are truly converted to Christ, i.e., when the members strive to be another Christ. The church is in interconnection with the secular society and has as her aim, to lead all mankind into the kingdom of God, the ultimate end of human history, a kingdom which is initiated by the sovereign rule of Christ over oneself.⁹⁷

Amidst the interrelationship between the church as a sacred society and the state as a secular society, the church must try to remove all hindrances both social and political which hinder the individual from achieving his purpose in life; in other words, the church should be "an honest institution" which is obliged to direct people without losing sight of the present reality towards man's ultimate end, namely, the kingdom of God.⁹⁸

94. Josef Neuner-Heinrich Roos. Der Glaube der Kirche.a.a.O.,p.274

95. Karl Rahner. Wort u. Eucharistie.in SzTh.IV, p. 353

96. Karl Rahner. Kirche u. Sacramente.inQ.D.Freiburg 1963, p.100

97. Wolfhart Pannenberg.Theologie u. Reich Gottes.Gütersloh 1971,p.35

98. Ibid., p. 41

As the mystical body of Christ, the church should not distance herself from societal problems; she should bear witness to the kingdom of God among men.

Inasmuch as the church is the people of God, the mystical body of Christ, the invisible church founded and directed by the holy spirit, a church which includes all humanity because the people of God is coextensive with humanity,⁹⁹ the visible church on earth therefore has the entire humanity, the entire human society as her area of interest. Since the kingdom of God which is at hand and into which the church is destined to lead people by proclaiming the word of God to them, converting men to God, men in whom the word of God takes flesh; a work which can only be done by the holy spirit; the church is therefore destined to rely on the holy spirit who initiates and completes the work of evangelisation and conversion. The spirit of God, the source of all life, helps mankind to see the world as a society, a peoples' and state community.¹⁰⁰ The church is not exclusively the invisible mystery of God nor is she in her external structure a mere human establishment but rather forms the two aspects of the church in which case neither can clearly be differentiated from the other because God uses the visible church to continue his work of salvation among men.¹⁰¹ A work which the spirit continues, a spirit which could be described as the finger of God with which the divinity touches history, the reaching out of the creator and the son into the human community, a spirit which is for all mankind the point of our entry into the mysterious trinitarian life.¹⁰²

We can see now how indispensable the holy spirit is to the church, without whom she would only be a mere work of human hands. It is the spirit which makes human action divine, purposeful and salvational for others and ecumenical in character. We come to know the father and the son through the spirit which is theirs and to share in

99. Boniface Willems. Who Belongs to the Church. Concilium, Jan. 65, p. 62ff

100. Otto A. Dilschneider. Theologie des Geistes. Gütersloh 1980, p. 57

101. J. Listl, H. Müller, H. Schmitz. Handbuch des Katholischen Kirchenrechts. Regensburg 1983, p. 8

102. Kilian McDonnell. The Determinative Doctrine of the Holy Spirit. in: Theology Today, July 1982, No. 2, Vol. XXXIX, NJ, p. 143

their divine nature by freely subjecting our will to the spirit of the father and the son. A community of believers can only be true to their name if the spirit of the one in whom they believe is integrated into their lives and makes them continue the work of Christ on earth.

The existence of many religions and Christian denominations, each one claiming the power of helping man to obtain the salvation which he needs, i.e., the power of saving man from damnation and sufferings,¹⁰³ presupposes the existence of God or a supernatural being, the holy, with whom man through religion has always been in contact. ¹⁰⁴

The church should not claim absolute divine love and righteousness as if the others are the work of the evil one. She should more or less attempt to bring into perfection all that which the holy spirit has initiated among men of various faiths and religions, to help all to a clearer vision of God and his will for mankind. On no account should the church refuse all that lies outside the visible church or regard such as untruth, but rather should rejoice over all truths and love wherever they are found. These bear witness to Christ and should be utilized to perfect the body of Christ. ¹⁰⁵

God saves men and women within the Christian way, the Muslims, within the Muslim way, the Jews, within the Jewish way, members of the African traditional religion, within the African way etc. In all religions the ultimate divine reality is known and responded to, and through these religious experiences and thought, the creative divine purpose in every individual is accomplished. The church should see through the experiences of other religions the infinite nature of God's spiritual mansions and God's divine Fatherhood for all mankind, and ¹⁰⁶ therefore avoid all forms of absolutism that could limit and hinder the work of the spirit of God among all men. The church as a visible institution should always be aware of her invisible dimension

103. Savramis Demosthones. Kriterien des Christlichen. Graz 1979, p.9

104. Anton G. Haider. Gott. Mainz 1976, p. 12f

105. Max Thurian. Feuer für die Erde. Freiburg 1979, p. 11

106. John Hick. in: Theology. Vol. LXXXV? No. 703, Jan. 1982, pp. 6-7

which includes all mankind in whom God's spirit abides, and therefore discourage not only within herself as an institution but in the society all sort of absolutism which limits human creativity. ¹⁰⁷

The church of Christ is an "open church", a church open to God, to men and to God's and man's future,¹⁰⁸ open to all men and to the inscrutable will of God and his plan for mankind without exception. According to Congar, there is every hope for non-Christians who have come to know God outside the church of gaining salvation, and are as such members of the mystical body of Christ, and would be at the last day in perfect unity with the church. ¹⁰⁹

According to Rahner, the church is the sacrament of the salvation of the whole world even in those areas where the church is still not in existence and may not be in existence. He further argues that since God became man, man is therefore that which God became as he revealed and gave up himself. Man is therefore in his original definition that which God becomes when He is outside the Godly sphere, on the other hand, man comes to himself when he reflects on the inconceivability of God's mystery. The incarnation is not only an elevation of human nature but also a revelation of the highest grade of man's perfection of his essence.¹¹⁰ Which means that everybody has the opportunity of salvation which Christ has put at his disposal.

According to the second Vatican council, there are churches outside the Catholic community which the council recognises; the non-Christians according to their grade of relationship with the church; the Jews, because they are the elected people of the Old Testament; the Moslems, because of their belief in one God; the pagans, in as far as they seek God in their religion and cults; the atheists, in virtue of their good conscience. ¹¹¹

In order to avoid any form of absolutism or alienation, the council recommended the establishment of particular churches rooted in their particular customs and traditions illuminated by the light of the gospel

107. HansJ.Kosmehl.Ethik in Ökumene u. Mission.Göttingen 1970, p.136

108. Jürgen Moltmann.Kirche in der Kraft des Geistes.München 1975,p.15

109. Yves Congar.Außer der Kirche kein Heil. Essen 1961, p.129

110. Karl Rahner. Die Anonymen Christen.In Schriften z. Theologie, Bd.VI, Köln 1965, p.548

111. Ortfried Müller.In wie weit gibt es außerhalb der Kirche Christentum - in wie weit Heil? in. Wahrheit u. Verkündigung Hrsg.L.Scheffczyk,u.andere; München 1967,p.1579

of Christ aimed at the salvation of all mankind. The council suggests, " The individual young churches, adorned with their own traditions, will have their own place in the ecclesiastical communion, without prejudice to the primacy of Peter's See". 112

Rome has made a step forward in restoring the authenticity of the faith among the faithful in the young churches, a Christianity rooted in the experiences and culture of the people. Rome has admitted her mistakes of the past, where evangelization was understood as a transplantation of one's culture. A mission where the spirit of Christ was exchanged with the spirit and interest of the nation, 113 of which the absence of the spirit of Christ in many of such missions made Christianity look like an ideology because of some of its racial overtones. 114

The church believed that outside the church there could be no salvation, a view held in many quarters until the 2nd. Vatican council, a claim of absolutism which divided the world into two camps, namely, pagans and Christians. As the only source of salvation, the church, the civilization and the societal structures it created or inherited in Europe were regarded as the only befitting social system, and the conversion of non-Christians, i.e., the pagans, was by all means as the essence and purpose of christianity. As a consequence of this claim of absolutism, European conducive church laws and ethics took a universal outlook and applicability. Church response to theological questions and disputations were made indisputable and binding at all times and places irrespective of the differences in culture, experiences and worldviews. A deep reflection on the truth and the necessity of the universality and absolutism of church laws and traditions (experiences) which would govern those who did not make such experiences was not taken seriously due to the low regard of the missionaries for the individuality, rights and culture of the people they encountered. Such spirit of evangelisation did not only create divisions among man-

112. The Documents of Vatican II, ed. by W. Abbot, J. Gallagher, a.a.u., p. 612 f

113. Richard G. Cote. Einige Absolutheitsansprüche in der Geschichte der Missionen in Concilium 16. Jhg. 1980, Zürich p. 319

114. Martin Koestler. Stirbt Jesus am Christentum. Schaffgotszen/Schweiz, 1982, p. 78

kind but promoted enmity between religions and people.

We therefore not only regard the spirit of Christ as the life-blood of the church but also as the principle of individual conversion, belief and eagerness to be another Christ. God confronts men in words and deeds; the word of God is like the creative power of God which is in itself one but has different effects on mankind. It in a way puts the whole life experience of man in question including all previous values. An honest and upright man who hears the word can not but regret past mistakes and life-styles and cannot resist the persuasive power of the word and the joy it brings in opening oneself to the spirit of the one who owns the word. There one comes to one's consciousness, consciousness of the presence of God revealed in Christ; of one's own indebtedness to God. One arrives in a disturbance of the present equilibrium of the self, ¹¹⁵ the experience makes one new by introducing Christ into one's life as well as by the consciousness of the presence of God within one. Conversion does not destroy the paradoxes found in human life but helps one to have a balance of the opposing qualities in one which are in turn responsible for one's individuality and personality build-up. A converted man respects the individuality of others as well as the individuality in himself which he uses in the service of God and man. Since Christ became man not to standardize human nature but to raise it to the level of the divine, ¹¹⁶ a converted man is therefore the one who honestly aims at the divine nature.

In view of the present divisions in the visible church of Christ, a church which is supposed to gather all men into the kingdom of God, and the divisions and misunderstanding arising from the church of Christ, the church (including all denominations) is due for a renewal, i.e., giving more room to the spirit of Christ, who alone can unite the Christian religious denominations. This renewal begins with the individual; everyone should open oneself to the spirit of God, following the example of the mother of God, Mary, who opened up herself to the spirit of God and then the word of God took flesh in her (Lk.1,38). ¹¹⁷ The church should be the place where God's "dream" and wishes for his people, the promises he

115. James P.Hanigan. Conversion and Christian Ethics.in, Theology Today.'April 1983, Vol.XL, No.1, NJ, p.29

116. H.Macl Currie.in.Theology,Jan.1974,Vol.LXXVII,No.643,London,p.639

117. Heribert Mühlen.Dokumente zur Erneuerung d.Kirche. Mainz 1982,p.58

made to the people through the prophets of old, should be fulfilled, a place where the will of God especially in the human society will be done; a church which directs humanity. 118

5.3.7 CONCLUSION

As we earlier quoted, "The kingdom of God is as if a man should scatter seed upon the ground, and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should sprout and grow, he knows not how. The earth produces of itself, first the glaze, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the grain is ripe, at once he puts in the sickle, because the harvest has come". (Mk.4,26-29). Just as the growth and spread of the kingdom of God is a mystery so also is the growth and spread of the church both in her visible and invisible nature. The early Christians amidst their sufferings and persecution longed for the coming of the kingdom of God; they saw the church as a sort of place or a gathering of the faithful, a preparation place for the kingdom of God, she has to gather together all the people of God and prepare them for the kingdom of God. Most of the church Fathers saw the kingdom of God already established on earth, which the church to some extent represents but continually strives to be in union with and like the heavenly church.

In view of the responsibility the church is carrying for man, we find it necessary that the church should look and direct her attention to the individuals in the community just as the spirit of God does in order to insinuate conversion and the possibility of the individuals to become another Christ. Since man is like the church a mystery, he is also like the church indefinable, because man transcends (like the church) the visible barriers and longs for the ideal self, which is God and the kingdom of God. The church has to recognize these facts and treat man as a mystery and as someone sacred irrespective of belief, she has to help man in building a secular society where one could freely and responsibly realise the creative power of God and the spirit in one through whom God continues his work of creation and the promotion of life. The answer to all problems of the church is the Holy spirit; he alone can direct the church as he led Christ while he was on earth; he alone can help the individual perfect himself like Christ. We only have to open up ourselves to the spirit and let his will be done in us as it was done in Mary, the mother of Christ. We hold that the history of the Church division is the history of the Holy Spirit's being neglected in the church and the mistakes in the church were as a consequent of his being replaced with human reason and spirit.

CHAPTER SIX

AN ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY

6.1.0 ECUMENE

The word ecumenical originates from the Greek word "oikoumene", meaning the whole inhabited earth, a word used by the Greeks to indicate the universe as a geographical entity. The Romans later used it in connection with political ambition and power, and their rulers were often referred to as "lords of the oikoumene"; later Emperor Nero was called "the Saviour and Benefactor of the Oikoumene". The word was often used by the Septuaginta, the oldest Greek translation of the OT to indicate the whole earth and had no political implication so also in the few places where the word was used in the NT. ¹ The church Fathers like Origen, St. Basil the Great, John Chrysostom and some other church fathers of the Eastern church easily jumped from the political conception, the whole empire, to what represented the whole church. Basil the Great in particular identified the church with oikoumene, ² some of the fathers saw the church as a spiritual oikoumene and the state as a secular oikoumene, the two aspects of one world. The church was identified with the oikoumene, the entire Roman empire, thereby sanctifying in a way the state which could without doubt be looked at as a worthy instrument in the hands of God, a very dangerous application.

Even the early church councils were called ecumenical because they were summoned by the emperor of the oikoumene. The word was used for the first time by the church as a whole at the council of Constantinople in 381 to describe the council of Nicaea held in 321. The emperor had authority over the church as a part of his oikoumene, thus sought for a dogmatic consensus among the theologians and bishops, a word which is still used today in the Eastern churches in the same

1. Ökumene Lexikon. Frankfurt 1983, pp. 877, 878

2. W.A. Vissert/T. Hooft. Der Sinn des Wortes "Ökumenisch".

Stuttgart 1954, p. 13 ff

context, the whole world, without any political implication.³ A scholar in ecumenical theology, Visser T Hooft, holds that the Count Zinzendorf (1545-1563), a German pietist, put forward a more contemporary and less technical use and application of the word ecumenical as referring to the universal Christian church across denominational boundaries. And at a conference of the Evangelical Alliance of the middle of the 19th. century, at the close of which a French delegate named Adolphe Monod thanked the British hosts for their "truly ecumenical spirit", a feeling of international Christian fellowship, and thereby indicating a use of the word ecumenical as a subjective attitude rather than a geographical, political or ecclesiastical phenomenon.⁴

One may have to say with certainty that modern ecumenism began in 1910, when the World Missionary Conference met in Edinburgh to discuss the problems the church division was creating in the evangelization work of the missionaries in Africa and other mission lands. Although the Roman Catholics and the Orthodox were absent, the conference went into history as a great landmark of both missions and ecumenism. At first ecumenical movement was seen as a sort of pan-Christian a movement and expression which the papal Enzycclical, *Mortalium animos* of 1928 condemned because of its pan-Christian overtones. Later the archbishop of Uppsala, Söderblom named the movement, ecumenical, the word that was formerly dropped in favour of pan-Christian, interpreted ecumenism to mean a gesture of reconciliation and the creation of a new community between the churches.⁵ The suspensions and the negative attitude of the Catholic church towards ecumenism lasted until the time of Pope John XXIII, who, calling the 2nd. Vatican Council with the *Motu proprio*, "Superno Dei nutu" of 1960, created the secretariat for promoting Christian unity. Almost all non-Catholic churches were invited as observers,⁶ although they had expected to participate as equal partners which

3. Ibid., pp. 17 ff

4. Ibid., pp. 22 ff

5. Ibid., pp. 26 ff

6. Karl Rahner. *Herders Theologisches Taschenlexikon*, 5. Freiburg 1973, p. 253 f

would make the council deserve the name ecumenical, indicating the differences of the use of the word ecumenism by Catholics and Protestants. According to Codex iuris canonici (CIC) can. 222-229, an ecumenical council is the council presided over by the successor of St. Peter or at least recognised by him, the pope. The ecumenical movement had a specific theology once articulated by D. Bonhoeffer as the theology which occupies itself with the relationship of the church with the entire world, in which case the mission of the church and the practical aspect of Christianity are emphasised. Since the Catholics identified themselves with the movement, ecumenical theology has taken a new dimension which sees ecumenical theology as the effort made towards the realization of the unity of the church, which includes all actions that could enhance the unity of the Christians. ⁷

Ecumenical theology is not a special theological discipline which is independent of other theological disciplines but one that integrates the whole theology, a discipline which preoccupies itself with the question of church division and the remedy; a theology of dialogue, a theology whose origin, element and nucleus is the bible, a theology of the common ground of faith and openness to one's belief. ⁸

According to P. Lengersfeld, ecumenical theology must see itself as the theory of ecumenical process and occupy itself with the longing of the churches to be one but cannot simply be one as they dream of. The theology therefore seeks ways of removing the obstacle on the way. Ecumenical theology conducts wide research on the cause of church separation whereby the theology makes research into non-theological factors that contribute to the separation. ⁹

According to the "Ecumenical Directory", Part 1, ecumenical movement has been set on foot by the Holy Spirit, which means that the Holy Spirit guided the Protestant founders of the movement and as such

7. Engelbert Neuhausler, Elizabeth Gössmann. Was ist Theologie ?
Beitrag. Peter Bläser, München 1966, pp. 385 ff

8. Herders Theologisches Taschenlexikon, a.a.O., p. 260

9. Peter Lengersfeld. Ökumenische Theologie. Köln 1980, p. 34 f

the movement rests in the hands of the Holy Spirit. Thus " ecumenical movement begins with the renewal by which the church expresses more fully and perfectly the truth and holiness which comes from Christ our Lord. 10

6.1,1 THE ABSOLUTENESS OF CHRISTIANITY - AN ECUMENICAL PROBLEM ?

The origin of the word ecumene and its various applications in every case before the ecumenical movement of the middle of the 19th. century implied in its usage a universality and an absoluteness of authority that bound all. Just as the Roman empire controlled the then world and was even regarded as an indispensable cradle of civilization, law and order, so also was Christianity regarded as indispensable for civilization and the salvation of the soul and the realization of human purpose. There is no doubt of the supremacy of Christianity among other religions, but does it then mean that the other religions can under no condition achieve the purpose of Christianity? Can one then say that under all circumstances a Christian would achieve salvation at end? We find that salvation of man at which almost all religions aim depends a lot on human disposition and effort; the absoluteness of any religion itself cannot save anybody. Human salvation depends to a great extent in human knowledge of God and His will and the reaction of man to this indisputable fact. We therefore measure the authenticity of a religion and personal piety by one's achievement and life, "then by their fruits you will know them".

The problem of the absoluteness of Christianity was a result of the church's having taken over the absoluteness of Christ and his message. According to the Acts of the Apostles, " ... there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4,12). Jesus Christ is the unity of God with mankind, the only way of mankind to God; he is the relationship with God and as such is the only true religion. The mistake one could make is to try to locate, define and classify Christ and his instrument for human salvation, his spirit through whom

he remains active as before; he is more free, intelligible and wise than we can imagine, we can therefore comprehend the spirit neither with our intellect nor through any other means. The church is a visible sign of the work of the spirit, an instrument (although imperfect) in the hands of the spirit, but she cannot be the only instrument. Christ is in the first place not after people believing in him but for doing what he does and teaches (Lk.9,49-50; 11,28).

For a philosopher like Hegel, God manifested Himself in history; that means the glorification of history and its culmination in the protestant culture of his time. The fulfillment of history took place in Christianity, more particularly in the Lutheran Christianity of his days. Philosophy of history then becomes a theodicy, a justification of the ways of God, thus the overthrow and annihilation of every other religion. ¹¹

Karl Barth defines the church as the only true religion; ¹² the other religions are faithless, and are affairs of ungodly men. ¹³

He sees religion apart from the revealed religion (Christianity) as a mere human fabrication, which in the place of revelation has a self-conceived picture of God. ¹⁴ Man is on his own incapable of conceiving God, ¹⁵ human actions and deeds are contradictions of the truth, ¹⁶ only the grace of God can lead man to the truth and this grace is the creator of the true religion, ¹⁷ which is Christianity alone. ¹⁸

Even R. Bultman holds that all concepts of God or ideas of God outside the Christian idea of God are only mere illusions,¹⁹ every other sort of revelation outside the revelation of Christ could only be an illusion. ²⁰

11. Joseph Prabhu. Hegels Concept of God.in: Man and World, vol. 17, No. 1, 1984, London p. 91 f

12. Karl Barth. Die kirchl. Dogmatik, 8d.1/2, Zürich, 1983 p.304

13. Ibid., p. 327

14. Ibid., p. 329

15. Ibid., p. 330

16. Ibid., p. 332 f

17. Ibid., p. 356

18. Ibid., p. 377

19. Rudolf Bultman. Die Frage der natürlichen Offenbarung.in: Glauben u. Verstehen II, Tübingen 1965, p. 86

20. Ibid., p. 99 f

He later reduces the absoluteness of his Christianity to an absoluteness that is not dependent on Christianity as a religion but on individual faith and trust in God which knows no alternative. ²¹ According to Troeltsch, Christianity embodies all the important elements found in the other religions, summarises them and develops them further. Christianity is meant to be not only the climax but the converging point of all the known aims of the other religions and for that reason should be identified as the central point of all religions. ²² Although he emphasises that an absoluteness is not attainable in this world he holds that the absoluteness which one has in Christianity is the certitude that one is in the direction of the perfect truth, to which Christianity is the way. ²³ Pierre Teilhard de Chardin sees the universe as a totality, as a sort of kybernetic system and in some way as an object, and therefore requires an absolute centre, an universal element, a principle guideline, a position which of course Christ deserves as he rightly asserted. Christ is the future of human evolution and the absolute "touchable" centre of the universe, a position he assumed through his incarnation. The world is therefore a sort of a panchristionism every movement and development is directed towards him. In virtue of the centrifugal position and nature of Christ, Christianity therefore is the answer and realisation of all religious questions and needs. ²⁴

For Karl Rahner, Christianity is the absolute religion to which all mankind is destined, a religion which has no rival or equal. ²⁵ Christ and his everlasting presence on earth (the church), the Christian religion, is the religion which binds man to God. ²⁶

21. Karl Jaspers/Rudolf Bultman. Die Frage der Entmythologisierung. München 1981, p. 96 f

22. E.Troeltsch. Die Absolutheit des Christentums.München 1969,p.90

23. Ibid., p. 92

24. Alfred Glässer. Konvergenz - Die Struktur der Weltsumme Pierre Teilhards de Chardin,Kevelaer,1970,pp.395f, 437

25. Karl Rahner. Das Christentum u. die nichtchristlichen Religionen. Schriften zu Theologie,V,Einsiedeln 1962, p.139

26. Ibid., p. 140

From here he goes on to identify non-Christians, particularly the so-called pagans, as "anonymous" Christians, ²⁷ in other words, Christianity is the absolute religion at which all other religions directly or indirectly strive.

Weger correctly pointed out the three main objections to Rahners anonymous Christianity, firstly, the inappropriateness of the name which does not suit the matter covered, secondly it is distasteful to non-Christians and thirdly could be seen as an attempt to relativise Christianity, ²⁸ which of course he did not aim for but the opposite. Could not such a name and the issue treated jeopardize the ecumenical movement and the unity of the church ?

From all we have seen, most of the leading theologians have in one way or the other seen Christianity as the absolute religion, which either nullifies other religions or the other religions are on their way towards christianity. There is no doubt that Christ as the God who took human flesh is the perfection of human nature, the apex of the so-called human evolution, the only ideal man and the unrivaled human "super ego". Christianity as an imitation of Christ, the religion which more than any other religion helps people to be like Christ, the ideal man and the perfection of man-and-God relationship, is meant to be the absolute religion, were it possible for man to be absolute and perfect on earth like Christ. We therefore say that Christianity is in a way superior to every other religion because it leads one directly and easier to Christ while the other religions could also lead one in their own way to Christ but indirectly and with a lot of effort. One should nevertheless make a distinction between Christianity as the teaching of Christ in the bible and the church as an attempt to realise and fulfill the spoken words of Christ and his works. The church is in the first place the work of human effort guided by the spirit of Christ who through man (the church) wishes to continue his preachings and good works among men, and is therefore conditioned by the culture and thinking of the men who make up the church. In other words, the church is a

27. Karl Rahner. Atheismus und implizites Christentum.in: Schriften zu Theologie,VIII, Einsiedeln 1967, p. 187

28. Karl Heinz Weger. Karl Rahner. a.a.O., p. 115

concretization of the words of God, a realization and particularization of the intentions of Christ in the bible; she is therefore a limitation of the infinite words and works of Christ. Even the whole churches brought together could not exhaust the infinite words and works of Christ and his spirit. While some missionaries did not take cognizance of the above facts and also the fact that they were preaching their culture while preaching the gospel, ²⁹ Nigerian Christianity is therefore in trouble as we may soon come to see.

6.1,2

CHRISTIANITY IN NIGERIA

The first Christian missionaries to visit and work in Nigeria were the Portuguese priests who accompanied Portuguese explorers in their bid to find a sea route to India in the 15th. century. Around 1477 the first direct contact was made with Benin and around 1555 Augustinian monks visited Warri. ³⁰ This first attempt to christianize the land was unsuccessful due to health and other reasons. By the second attempt the church had already been divided (the protestant reformation), north Atlantic slavery of the 18th. century had ruined the land and Europeans in general were seen as colonialists and intruders. Around 1845, some churchmen of the Church Missionary Society (CMS) who dominated the missionary work of this second attempt in Nigeria. Among the early missionaries were Samuel Ajayi Crowther who later became the first modern African bishop, and the German - born missionary the Rev.J.F.Schön, who were charged with pursuing the policy of "Bible and Plough" meant to christianize, civilize, occupy and train the people. ³¹

Christianity and the message of redemption was concentrated among the dwellers of the coastal areas and the interior was for many reasons impossible to penetrate. The first missionary to work in Yoruba land in 1809 was Thomas Birch Freeman, whose father was an African and his mother an Englishwoman, ³² followed by Ajayi Crowther in 1841. Simon Jonas an Igbo Christian and former slave

29. Bernard Lonergan. Method in Theology, a.s.O., p.362

30. Samuel U.Erivo. The Urhobo, The Isoko and the Itsekiri.
Ibadan 1979, p. 1

31. Michael Crowder. A Short History of Nigeria.NY.1966, p.142 f

32. John Ferguson. Some Nigerian Church Founders.Ibadan 1971,p.1f

who was among those who accompanied Schön and Crowther in their mission of 1841 and were ment to serve as interpreters of the missionaries, later became the first resident missionary on the Niger (in Igbo land) ³³ and later worked together with John Christopher Taylor, an Igbo who was also sold as slave. Baptist missionaries arrived in Nigeria around 1850, headed by Thomas Jefferson Bowen, an American, Moses Lade jo Stone became in 1880 the first indigenous Baptist minister in Nigeria. ³⁴

More reinforcement came from the freed African slaves in Jamaica from the Presbyterian missionaries, who had been in Jamaica since 1924. Among those who returned to Africa and in particular to Nigeria to devote themselves to missionary work were the Rev. Hope Masterton Waddell, a European named Samuel Edgerley and his wife, and three Jamaicans named Andrew Chisholm Edward Millar and a certain George. They left Liverpool in 1846 for Calabar where the chiefs were eager to have missionaries to teach, aducate and help the people in agricultural works. ³⁵

Their enterprise was effective and was later continued by white as well as by black missionaries.

An interesting group of evangelists came into being when an Irishman called Samuel Bill decided himself to spread the good news of God's love to others independent of any denomination nor was he interested in finding his own denomination. He arrived in 1887 in Calabar at the Qua Iboe River where he settled and started preaching to the people about Christ and the need of conversion and baptism. Bill was later succeeded by a native called David Ekong who undertook the full ministry of the church and by whom the church was further strengthened. Qua Iboe's mission in Nigeria was quite extraordinary in two ways, the mission was free from denominational sectarianism; there was no concern to make one Catholic, Protestant etc. but they had only one ambition, namely, to convert people to Christ. Secondly, the church was unlike the other denominational

33. Ibid., pp. 21, 25

34. Ibid., p. 70

35. Ibid., pp. 42 ff

churches not a means of exporting European culture and tradition but rather aimed at a self-sustaining church built on what the people knew already. ³⁶

Catholics were (compared to the CMS Anglicans') late comers to the missionary scene, a scene which was dominated by the Spiritans (The Holy Ghost Fathers) who mainly came from France. In 1884, Northern Nigeria was entrusted to the Society of African Missions, and Southern Nigeria remained in the hands of the Holy Ghost Fathers. Among the early ones were Fr. Joseph Lutz, Fr. John Horne, Brother Hermas and Brother John who were sent in 1885 by the Spiritan Superior Fr. Leo Lejeune to open up the Southern Nigeria for the church and concentrated mainly in Eastern Nigeria. ³⁷ The Catholic church later gained more ground than the other denominations with whom she scrambled and competed for the souls and 'bodies' of Nigerians. A successful enterprise or rather mission which owes its success to their achievements in the educational sector which Fr. and later Bishop Joseph Shanahan initiated. ³⁸

From every indication one can say with certitude that the church and Christianity in Nigeria were established through the missionary efforts of Africans themselves who were taken into slavery and later were freed, converted, and were mandated by their various churches to preach the good news of the kingdom of Christ to Nigerians. Except the Catholics, they others relied heavily on indigenous clergymen and preachers, but this gap was filled up in the Catholic church through the massive use of catechists who were teachers and at the same time interpreters. As interpreters, they often told the people what they thought the priest should say and which was often what the people expected the priest to say; in such a way the catechists could be said to be the actual evangelizers and preachers of the good news. A fact which was as a result of the catechists' insufficient knowledge of English and perhaps also of the preachers themselves many of whose mother tongue was not English,

36. Ibid., pp. 82 ff

37. Henry J. Koren. The Spiritans. New York 1958, p. 527

38. Ibid., p. 531

also the missionaries' ignorance of the culture and mentality of the people which often made the catechists to mediate between the expectation of the people and that of the missionaries. In whatever way, one would consider it, one would definitely come to the conclusion that Christianity was not totally a foreign body in African and in particular Nigerian life. Blacks dominated the missionary work at the beginning but about 1870 there came a change in European relations with Africa which also affected the relations in the churches.³⁹ Ground had to be prepared for colonialism, and we shall soon come to see the role missionaries played.

2.1.3

MISSIONARY WORK AND COLONIALISM

According to Thomas Aquinas, God cannot be classified under a genus because whatever belongs to a genus must necessarily have a nature.⁴⁰ In other words, to classify God would mean to define and limit Him; that amounts to creating a God-like image and intelligence. To say where he is and where He is not, to say who are His people and who are not His people, is equivalent to limiting the work and love of His spirit, who has neither favourites nor is He a respecter of persons (Acts. 10, 34-35). Fasting and prayers are of little meaning to God as long as the innocent are bound in chains, as long as people are oppressed and enslaved, suffer hunger and want. Fasting and prayers which please God are the liberation of the oppressed, the enslaved, establishing justice and helping the needy (Jesh. 58, 6 f). Simply because the Spirit of Christ was expected to adhere to human judgement and expectations, Christianity was limited by human thinking, judgement and values, which in other words mean culture. That is to say that Christianity was identified and limited by a culture. That would not have been wrong if such a Christianity is understood in a relative sense i.e., limiting it to a particular culture instead of making it absolute. Transporting such a Christianity to another people with quite a different culture would either mean a refusal of Christianity

39. Calvin Rieger, *Traditional Christianity As An African Religion*
African Religions, A Symposium, a.a.O., p.264 f

40. Thomas Aquinas, *Über das Sein und das Wesen*. hrsg.v.R.Allers,
Wien 1963, p. 52

and saving one's culture or an acceptance of Christianity and refusal of one's culture. Culture creates for a people a worldview, determines their thinking and life and is grounded in the past realities and experiences of a people, and helps the people to prepare for the future. ⁴¹ Moreover every individual carries everywhere with him his history and experiences in which his culture becomes meaningful, therefore conversion should not only give more meaning to his history, experience and life or culture but it also should try and plant Christianity in his experience and life or what would amount to one's culture. That means that Christianity needs culture both as a dialogue partner and also an indispensable co-worker. A man therefore comes to know Christ through experience and history (culture), illuminated by the light of the gospel of Christ; and such a man can then speak of Christ and praise him in the language of his culture. ⁴² From such an idea of a culturalized and civilized Christianity brought into Africa, an idea which also crowns the culture and nation that culturalized Christianity and made it an instrument of civilization for the uncivilized, one cannot but make the nation and culture indispensable instruments of missionalization. In so doing one becomes inclined to identify gospel interests with national interests, and thereby support exploitation of the peoples' land, ⁴³ and the dehumanization of the people to whom they are to preach love and respect of humanity. That most of the missionaries had no sympathy for the suffering natives, and collaborated as far as they could with their colonial countrymen, is evident in many of the reports of both missionaries and colonialists, who saw the oppression of Africans as a part of God's command and will. ⁴⁴ It is a fact that the church and many leading theologians like Thomas Aquinas supported the use of violence against non-Christians and heretics, ⁴⁵ supported and even kept and maintained

41. Ametefe Nomenyo, *Evangelium und Kultur*, in: *Zeitschrift f. Mission*, Jahrgang VII, Heft 2, 1982, p. 86

42. *Ibid.*, p. 88

43. Werner Ustorf, *Missionsgeschichte als theologisches Problem*, *Zeitschrift f. Mission*, Jhg. IX, Hef. 8, Basel 1983, p. 24

44. Horst Gründer, *Die christliche Mission im System des westlichen Imperialismus*, *ibid.*, p. 42

45. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa th. ii*, II q. 10 a 8, in Thomas Ohm, *Machet alle Völker zu meinen Jüngern*, Freiburg, Wewel 1962, p. 689f

provisions for slavery ⁴⁶ and often condemned to death the faithful who were suspected of witchcraft. One would therefore not be surprised by the double morality of some of the missionaries, who in many places like Angola and Congo and in some other areas carried on slavery to meet up to their financial requirements. ⁴⁷

Christianity came to Africa in the 3rd. century and may have reached Alexandria and Cyrene just as it reached Ethiopia (Acts.8, 27), during the apostolic age, which some scholars date about A.D. 35. The church flourished in North Africa stretching to Ethiopia and Nubis, but did not reach all Ethiopians (Blacks) as Origin in A.D. 185-254 made clear in his commentary on St. Matthew - that the gospel had not been preached among all Ethiopians beyond the River Nile, indicating that there were some Christians among the non-Christian peoples of Africa south of the Sahara. ⁴⁸

The hope the church could have in Africa can only come through a recognition of the African traditional worldview where, for example, two forces exist, one against life, the other for life, good and evil, Christ and the Devil, making it therefore imperative for the people to join Christ and overpower and destroy the power of the force which is inimical to man and his welfare. ⁴⁹

It should also be the aim of education to improve human living conditions, and the restoration of the traditional family, village and community unity which is reflected in the traditional cosmic unity, a unity and harmony between man and nature, between Africans and their world, ⁵⁰ thus a harmony between one another and mankind. If this had been done, the Biafra/Nigeria crises could have been avoided, where Nigerians killed one another with neo-colonialists' weapons.

46. Thomas Ohm, *ibid.*, p. 652

47. A.F.C.Ryder, *Portuguese Missions in West Africa*, in: *Tarikh: Ibadan:vol.3,No.1,publ.hist,society Nigeria, Longman* 69, p. 11

48. J.A.Illevbare, *Christianity in Nubia*, in: *Tarikh,vol,2,No. 1* 1967 Longman, Ibadan. p.54

49. Ametefe Nomenyo, *a.a.O.*, p. 87

50. Erwin Mock, *a.a.O.*, p. 33

6.1,4

A DISUNITY OF THE CHURCH - A DISUNITY OF NIGERIAN SOCIETY

In spite of the shortcomings of foreign missionaries, one should praise them for their missionary zeal, their love of Christ and mankind and Africans in particular. They brought a light in a time when their fellow countrymen had put out the already dwindling light in Africa through their illegal trade in human beings and other misdeeds. Christianity served both a political, social and economic goals all to the advantage of the people. There is no doubt that their efforts as we have already seen helped in consolidating colonialism; we may now have to consider some of the advantages of missionary work in Nigeria.

The missionaries helped in uniting warring and belligerent factions by converting them to Christ, a unifying factor. They as well discouraged many practices that were detriment to humanity and to the society, promoted education, vocational training, medical and health care and in many occasions defended the Christians and the people from colonial laws and oppression. We do not intend to forget that such a process and approach which is paternalistic in nature uprooted the people from their native soil; they were of course the children of their time.

One who is realistic to facts and history would tend to say that the advantages of missionary enterprise in Nigeria as well as in many African nations were mainly social and economical rather than religious. Social in that Christ and the churches were more unifying factors among communities, the pivotal point of a new concept for society and human relationships, than an impulse to a new religious experience of God and a strong identification of oneself with Christ. People were far more identified with their respective churches than with Christ whose nature and will transcends church borders as well as national frontiers. To be a Christian was socially equivalent to being a civilized and a modern man. Since some of the churches attached educational and medical help to conversion and membership of their own church, some people therefore went into these churches with the aim of attaining a better standard of living. Surely, the social advantages were essential aspects of evangelization depending on the

intention and the circumstances surrounding the action (social aid). Social aid which could prepare ground for true evangelization are those done for the sake of Christ and on humanitarian bases. It is wrong to give one aid on condition that one is converted to the particular church of the giver. Christ did not help only those who believed in him as the Son of God but those who believed that he could help them. By the fact that aid was given not for the sake of Christ alone, the people got the impression that it was done for the sake of the church as an organization competing with similar organizations. The social help was on condition that one change one's life, be baptised, become an active member of the church and obey the laws of the church, all of which the people obeyed in order to please the missionaries. In other words, the religion was in many cases not internalized, that means, many went to the church for the promised material benefits rather than for spiritual benefits.

Spiritually, the people did not see the need for a new religion or spirituality, and thus were compelled to practice the two religions at the same time, and were therefore divided within themselves. Perhaps if good works and deeds had went first to everyone irrespective of religion and if education and other social help were not immediately conditioned to membership in a particular denomination, the people could have one day come to ask the missionaries why they had been so good to them, and the answer would have been, we are doing all these for you because we are Christians. A Christian is one who does good to everyone as Christ did, a Christian is the Christ of our time. Since that was not done the people became members of the various churches in order to please the missionaries and for other non-religious motives. We do not tend to say that there were no real conversion, honestly, the church remained till today due to the efforts of very few converted Christians who succeeded in identifying themselves with the life and words of Christ rather than with the ambition of their churches alone.

On the political scene, the various rival European powers were struggling for every piece of the land; on the religious scene, the various rival denominations were scrambling for territories and loyalties of the natives, but could Christ struggle against himself ?

Since missionaries came in order to call people to follow Christ, to win people to Christ, should they not have admired the efforts and courage of one another and accepted one another as comrades instead of rivals ? Were they not confusing the people the more, creating more divisions and making the gospel unbelievable ? Contradictions would neither be helpful to the missionaries nor to the people whom they came to help. Christ was sent to help man realise himself fully as an image of God. Christ did not necessarily preach new doctrines nor did he want his hearer to become some one else, but that he should realise himself as a child of God in spite his religion, social stand and race, and also to realise that one's neighbour, a term which knows no geographical, cultural, religious and social border in its application, is also a child of God. In short, Christ first made his listeners self-conscious, aware of the love and nearness of God, his acceptance of every one and the responsibility one owes to God and to oneself and to one's neighbour. True conversion comes through self-discovery, consciousness of one's self-abuse and enslavement through sin (the unconsciousness of oneself as an image of God and of the presence of God) followed by regret and self-liberation. The only true instrument of such a conversion and liberation is the word of God spoken to one in one's "ungodliness and dejection"; converted and liberated, one then receives the spirit of Christ, the Way of life.

Missionary work was often seen and taken as an extension of colonialism both by the missionaries themselves and by the natives, because they worked had in hand with their various governments and colonial rulers,⁵¹ the spoken word of God was therefore spoken in a way that it would turn the hearer into a worthy instrument in the hands of the colonial rulers and ecclesiastical strategies and plans and Christ would go emptyhanded. Where a church helps one to see oneself as one destined to be like Christ, one will definitely come to promote the church as the creation of Christ, her founder, and respect the state or government which cares for human freedom.

51. Karl Hammer. Weltmission u. Kolonialismus, München 1978, p.333f

While mission was understood as "born again" or a sort of metamorphosis to be directed from outside and by elements outside human individual experience, so Christianity was often not internalised and therefore gave rise to a division in oneself. Since Christianity did not completely take over all the social and religious functions of the traditional religion which it was supposed to replace because Christianity was not so internalised like the old religion, the people therefore stood between the two. They were neither convinced Christians nor were they convinced adherents of the old religion. The territory was divided among the churches, the inhabitants divided according to denominations as well as within themselves.

As a result of the scandal of separation, the attack on one another, the struggle for territories and the competition, the missionaries decided in 1911 to hold a conference on issues affecting their work, this conference was called as soon as the boundary settlement was made between the Protestant churches. The Catholics of course did not agree to the proposed principle of comity, because it would mean recognizing the separated churches. 52

In spite of that the conference still took place and marked the start of the ecumenical movement in Nigeria. As Kalu puts it, "the solution of boundaries led to discussion of practical issues, and the recognition of their common problems led to the suggestion of organic unity ... the aim of which was to create a more effective witness by avoiding denominational competition". 53

The Calabar conference of 1911 was in many ways inspired by the Edinburgh conference of 1910, which the various Protestant denominations, inspired by the sin of division which hampered missionary work of the various churches, organized in order to iron out their differences and look for compromise. As a result of the Calabar conference of 1911, which called for a unity of action, the Protestant churches of the Southern Nigeria assumed the name, "Evangelical Union of Southern Nigeria". The 1911 conference was attended by the

52. D.U.Kalu. Divided People of God. Lagos 1978, p. 3

53. Ibid., p. 4

Presbyterians, the Primitive Methodists, Niger Delta Pastorate, and the Qua Iboe Mission. At the second conference in 1923, the four groups who had attended the conference of the 1911 invited the Yoruba Mission (Anglican), the Wesleyans, the Dutch Reformed Church, the Sudan Interior Mission (S.I.M.), the Basel Mission and the British and Foreign Bible Society. They discussed some of their common problems, namely, marriage problems, education, liquor control, medical services, gambling and boundaries, and took steps to strengthen their unity. 54

Missionary ecumenical consciousness of the post-Edinburgh conference of 1910 led to the formation in 1930 of the Christian Council of Nigeria, an association of missionary-oriented Protestant churches. 55 The union of the churches in the Southern Nigeria and the attempt to incorporate the Protestant churches in the North to form a Federal Evangelical Union, received a psychological discouragement due to the refusal of the churches in the North to form an organic unity with those in the South, because their problems were not the same, as they claimed. 56

Nevertheless, one can see that there can be no excuse for failing to unite Christian churches; it would only go to show how far the churches are from Christ and how far they recognize the impediments of the division on Nigerians.

Reviewing the history of ecumenism in Nigeria, the immediate causes of the longing for unity among the Protestant churches of the South and the seemingly absence of similar problems which the Southern churches encountered in the Northern churches, who had clear-out boundaries where no other denomination had a right to preach, 57 we find that if it had been so also in the South, the various churches might not have been so eager for a unity. One also has to take note of the fact that the churches came together because they saw the Catholic church as a threat to their existence, therefore it would be right to say that a mediate cause of the unity or ecumenism was to unite against the Catholics, their common enemy. 58

54. Ibid., p. 5

55. Ibid., p. 11

56. Ibid., p. 19

57. Ibid., p. 17 f

58. Ibid., p. 6 f

According to Kalu, the original impulse behind the union movement in Nigeria was as a result of hindrances the missionaries encountered in the realisation of their objectives. Kalu went on to say:

"It meant that the consultation was not among Africans seeking to find how the reality of God revealed in Jesus Christ could be realized among them in their particular situation. Instead, they met as representatives of various foreign denominations each determined to ensure the preservation of his tradition". 59

With few exceptions, the unity was longed for administrative purposes in the first place and the confrontation of the Catholics who were considered as enemies of their ecclesiastical aims. A move which does not take the interest of the people who were divided within themselves because of the inability of the new religion to completely replace the old, and divided and separated from one another because of the division and separation of the churches from one another. We would therefore call such ecumenism, " technical ecumenism", because it seemed the spirit of Christ was not allowed to dominate the conferences and lead the people to a unity in Christ.

As we said earlier, missionary activities in a way bridged gaps between individuals, between clans and villages; people were mobilised under the leadership of the missionaries and their representatives. Schools, training centres and hospitals were built by the various denominations. Here, children and adults were not only taught to read and write and about health, moral and domestic care, but were also told that the people in the other school were somehow inferior. In many cases children were not allowed to attend a school belonging to a church of which they were not members, hospitals at times applied this same logic. In the long run, one sees that missionary establishments were in some way centres for segregational consciousness. So one can say that missionaries united the people to divide them once more, now no longer on ethnic, villagial and clannish loyalties, but on religious (denominational) allegiances.

59. Ibid., p. 46

The denominational animosities did not stop with the foreign missionaries but rather was carried on by the indigenous clergy and laity. A lecture delivered sometime in 1950 by some well known anglican intellectuals ⁶⁰ enumerated the so-called Catholic threats to Protestantism. They were not happy that the Catholics were making progress in the fields of evangelisation; they either understood that the Catholics were preaching another Christ or that Christ could be divided. Since the churches have the same bible, they cannot be preaching different Christs without contradicting the bible and tradition. But since the spirit of Christ which is supposed to have established the churches cannot be divided nor can it oppose itself, for the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, patience and kindness; one who has the spirit of Christ would have no self-conceit, would not provoke anyone nor be envious of anyone (Gal.5,22 ff); the churches who were against one another were therefore acting according to the flesh of which strife, jealousy, anger, selfishness, dissension and party spirit are some of its manifestations (Gal.5,20f). According to Paul, no-one can say that Jesus is Lord, except by the holy spirit, and this spirit manifests itself differently in everyone who says that Jesus is the Lord. There may be many members of the same body, but they are one in that they make up the same body, each one complements the other, because they drink of the one spirit whose only one aim is to assemble all under Christ, so that Christ may be all in all. But unfortunately we tend to tell the spirit who is a member of the body of Christ and who is not.

The churches have to unite not in the interest of any other thing other than the interest of Christ, that Christ may reign in all who hear and believe in his words and be one in him, that Christ may be their way and the guide on the way through his holy spirit. Our Nigerians are being divided by the religions which they confess all which come from outside and have some foreign interest attached to them. It is now left to Nigerians to unite the religions through the spirit of Christ so that they would through the religions come

60. This lecture is for private circulation thats why we could not quote directly from it, but is a clear indication of the relationship between churches meant to serve a people.

to be united in Christ and in God the Father of all mankind.

In order to do that we have to go to Europe and see why the church was divided and separated, division of which Nigerians had nothing to do other than to suffer from the effects of European misunderstanding of the church of Christ and the freedom and wisdom of the spirit of Christ. We have no doubt that the unity of the Nigerian churches would bring about a unity of the people and a readiness for a dialogue with Islam all to the glory of God and the good of Nigeria and the entire mankind. Separation ! But why ?

6.2,0

CHURCHES IN THE CHURCH AND THE UNITY OF THE CHURCH

" I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may all be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (Joh.17,20-21).

Christ, aware of the dangers and the scandal which hatred would bring within the community of believers, prayed to the Father that those who believed in him could be one just as he and the Father are one. In other words, Christ prayed that they might be led by his Spirit which is one with himself and with the Father; The Christians are meant to be integrated in the Trinity of God whose image man bears. Christ did not necessarily pray that the Faithful may believe the same doctrine and use the same liturgy; he did not emphasize the doctrinal unity but rather a union of wills between all believers, a cooperation with one another in human daily life... " for the tree is known by its fruit" (Mt.12,33).

From his own point of view all who believe in him and have him as their way to salvation and life are already one in faith. He therefore prayed that hatred may not exist within them and not that there may not be plurality and diversity within the community of believers. Hatred promotes intolerance, hostility and bad faith which constantly seeks in the other an occasion for quarrelling, the refusal to recognize anything likeable in the other, hatred promotes segregation, war and the desire for revenge. ⁶¹

61. J.M.R.Tillard. What is the Church of God? in: One in Christ.

A Catholic Ecumenical Review.vol.XX,No.3, Bedford 1984, p.229

Where there is no hatred there can be no division or disunity but differences and diversities within the same community would be seen as the work of the spirit which is meant to build up the community (1 Cor. 12,4-11). Love is to keep the community of believers in unity with one another in the Spirit of Christ and in God whose image man bears.

The existence of the churches should therefore not impede upon the unity and witness of the church on earth. As long as there is love existing between them, the multiplicity of Churches in the Church, the mystical body of Christ, are to be seen as the work of the Spirit of Christ which are meant to promote the growth of the church which includes a growth in her diversification without which she cannot incorporate the various peoples, cultures mentalities and problems of our times. In so doing the church of Christ on earth becomes more catholic, a term which implies a growth in diversity and richness within the unity of many churches, a diversity and richness which would eschatologically be seen as the fullness of Christ.⁶² The word itself, catholic, is derived from the Greek word 'Katholikos', meaning general, universal, union with all; its opposite is 'merikos or kata meros', meaning, particular, partial.⁶³ She (the church) has the duty of reconciling all things in Christ, starting with all the believers who should reconcile with one another through Christ. Being catholic, the church of Christ (all the Christian churches) has to embrace all aspects of humanity, the fruit of her endeavours is to be measured in how far the unity of mankind under Christ and his Father have been established. Her greatest danger would be the attempt to put the visible Catholic church over the invisible catholic church of which Christ is the head and the only shepherd; for according to Ignatius of Smyrna, Christ is the head of the invisible church just as the bishop is the leader and the middle-point of a regional community.⁶⁴

This church in which all other churches participate and exist as members through their belief in Christ, the Lord of mankind and life and through their readiness to follow his way, this church is

62. Dale M.Schlitt. Ecumenism from a Renewed Catholic Perspective.

in,One in Christ,vo.XX,No.1, Bedford 1984, p. 51

63. J.W.D.Kelly.Katholizität u. Apostolizität. Göttingen 1971,p.10

64. Ibid., p. 11 f

no other than Christ himself, who is both the giver and the gift. In her exists no disunity, he is the true vine, " and as the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me" (Joh. 15,4), and every branch that separates itself from the vine would have no hope of survival. Just as the vine branches are identified by the properties of vine which all the branches have in common, the fruits they bear and their common root, so also are the churches identified through the properties (Spirit) of Christ which they share one another and the same fruits which they are expected to bear. The members possess a new mind (Rom. 12,2), the mind of Christ. Just as the faithful cannot have a righteousness that is separate from Christ (1Cor.1,30), so also can he not have a mind that is his own apart from Christ, for only the mind of Christ can give true praise and glory to God. 65

The fact that the synoptic writers did not say anything about the personal appearance of Christ implies that they did not see anything peculiar in his appearance; he was then like every other Jew of his time, except for sinning. 66 The church is therefore challenged to be human like Christ, to identify herself with all the problems of man irrespective of religion and culture. Christ's humanity and aspiration should be the ideal of the church; he became a real man in order to show man the way to salvation and founded the church as a church for mankind and from mankind. 67

A criterion for the catholicity of any particular church should be her engagement works for the entire humanity; her non-religious works for humanity seen as a part of the gospel and life of Christ. The authenticity of a church depends to a large extent on her relevance to man's daily problems, now man in general, an image of God, for whom Christ took flesh. A church which does not make man more human cannot be a church of Christ, who became man himself so that mankind may have life in full, and he is a model of this life.

65. Peter Hocken. The oneness of God and the Unity of All Creation. in: One in Christ. vo., XX, No. 3, Bedford 1984, p. 189

66. Paul Simon. Das Menschliche in der Kirche Christi. 3rd. ed. Freiburg 1948, pp. 10, 12

67. Ibid., p. 13

The unity of the churches in the church depends on their faithfulness to Christ and his mission, namely, service to mankind without exception. This unity has to be felt in the field of active service for the sake of Christ; Christ is not only to be believed but also to be lived. Our beliefs would be nothing if we cannot put them into practice, our practice incorporate our beliefs and therefore should be much higher than a mere belief. Christ does not so much need the praises and worship of the churches than their continuation of his works of love and justice among men. A means to the unity of the church is not a demolition of the churches that separated, or to ask the churches to do away with the experiences, knowledge and traditions they have acquired over so many years which would be as unrealistic and unfair as to deny them of the presence of the Spirit of Christ. The churches have to learn to accept the existence of one another.⁶⁸ The type of unity which would make the church one or rather bring the churches nearer to one another and to Christ, is a unity whereby no one would absorb the other, a church where differences could still exist, where churches exist with right and necessity but not in separation, and form subjects of the plurality of the unity.⁶⁹

From all we have seen, the diversity of the church is a necessary component of the expansion of the church; the church grows through diversification and plurality. A unity conceived as a dismantlement of the plural nature of the church is doomed to fail and would mean a retardation of the achievements of the Spirit of Christ among men, a reversal of the growth of the mustard seed. We often assume that the gospel of Christ is the basis of our actions, that the church is based on the bible, the fundament of Christianity. We say so as if the gospel is something behind us, something we have outgrown, something we already possess. Truly, the word of God spoken to man is the source of the church whose realisation is the aim of the church and of Christianity in general. The church and the individuals grow as they move towards the fulfillment of the spoken words of God in the bible;

68. Heinrich Fries, Karl Rahner. Einigung der Kirchen - Reale Möglichkeit, Freiburg 1983, p. 54 f

69. Heinrich Fries. Glaube u. Kirche als Angebot. Köln 1976, p.333

a journey towards the gospel and the realisation of the words of the bible as it is meant by Christ is the essence of Christianity, and an important element in the unity of the church of Christ. Diversities in the church were not responsible for the disunity and separation of the churches from one another, but hatred; therefore the first and most important step towards a unity in the church is a change of mind; acceptance instead of disregard and hatred. Since the church is the church of Christ no-one can therefore through human reasoning alone bring about the unity of the church, the unity can only be achieved through our openness to the Spirit of Christ. Separation is the result of human sins.

6.2,1 THE CHURCH SEPARATION

The fact that churches exist within one church cannot be strange in the experiences of the earlier church, but that they separate from one another and no longer communicate as usual with one another can only be regretted and qualified as a sin against the Spirit of Christ and mankind. Disunity exists not only between denominations but also within denominations, there are in many denominations crying for unity with other denominations disunity and tension between the hierarchy and the laity, between bishops and theologians.⁷⁰ Such disunities which could be described as plurality of opinions are inevitable in every healthy community, so long as hatred does not determine the opinions, so long as the opinions are made in love and interest of the church and of Christ's mission among mankind, such opinions could be described as the work of the Spirit who constantly builds the church. Definitely, not all separation could be termed sinful since there could be various motives for separation and some separations have led to a deeper knowledge of Christ and dedication to mankind;⁷¹ separation becomes then sinful when the intention is selfish and "unchristocentric". Although in whatever way we look at separation, we can only testify its existence as a consequence of human failings. The church and the human race cannot afford further separations no

70. Heinrich Fries. *Ökumene statt Konfessionen ?* Frankfurt 1977, p.9

71. Bert B.Beech. *Ecumenism Boon or Bane ?* Washington 1974, p. 112 f

matter in what area because the problem of the unity of mankind is not only a problem of the church but of the whole human community. That's why some foresighted ecumenists tend to revive the old meaning of the word 'oikoumene' - "the whole inhabited earth", interpreted politically and syncretistically to mean world community.⁷² Since there are still forces that endanger this world community, forces like the contrast between the rich and the poor, racial and cultural alienation of peoples, the concept of the world community has to become a topic in theology, after all mankind is the image of God. Unity of human race has to be emphasised because the world community is breaking down in nations, races, classes, sexes, religions, and ideologies inimical to one another.⁷³

6.2,2

THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

The structure of each and every one of the churches or denominations is characterised by its history and background. According to Prof. Zander:

"the history of the church is a part of its present and is inherent in the Christianity of today, which must be conceived not as a chaos of contradictions but as a system of naturally interconnected religious doctrines and points of view".⁷⁴

We therefore have to consider the various factors that contributed to the separation of the churches from one another and the problems they pose.

The structure of the Orthodox church

The orthodox church of the Eastern world is not an organic unit but is made up of number of independent, autocephalous and autonomous churches. These churches are in unity with one another, share the same teaching, cult and constitution and see themselves as members of the one orthodox church with various jurisdiction. As autocephalous churches with independent legal administrative organs independent of any other church, they elect their own bishops provided the church is

72. Geiko Müller-Fahrenholz. True Ecumenism and False. in. Unity in Today's World. Geneva 1978, p. 191

73. S.J. Samartha. Courage for Dialogue. Geneva 1981, p. 123

74. L.A. Zander. Vision and Action. London 1952, pp. 74-75

recognized and approved by the mother church. 75

The patriarch of Constantinople is regarded among the patriarchs of the orthodox church as the *primus inter pares*, he holds a strong spiritual authority and is also called the ecumenical patriarch, seconded by the patriarch of Alexandria, who is in charge of African orthodox christians. 76

The great schism - The estrangement of Eastern and Western Christians

The schism came about gradually over many years by a long complicated process which started sometime in the 11th. century, and was instigated and conditioned by many non-theological factors. In spite of all the influences of non-theological factors that contributed to the schism, one can with certitude say that theological misunderstandings were the fundamental cause of the schism and estrangement. 77

Most prominent among the causes of the separation, apart from the theological disputes, was not the hunger for power on the part of the Pope and the bishop of Constantinople but because of the differences in the Roman and Greek intellectual world. Greeks cherished to a large extent philosophy and the arts; the Romans, military, politics and law.

The orthodox theology has been since the middle ages under the influence of aristotelian thinking and moreover platonism had been for long a part of the tradition. On the other hand, the Western church was characterised by her independent, self-developed intellectual life. Later on, the Eastern church split into what may be called national churches and became more or less identified with the state as it was the case with the church of the West. Since the church had no authority like that of the pope which could care adequately for the unity of the church, the powers of the emperors continued therefore to grow at both ecclesiastical and state level and went to an extent that the monarch was sacralized. 78

The bishop of Rome had authority over the Eastern churches until the 4th. century, the rise of the patriarch of Constantinople. With the downfall of Rome, the patriarch of Constantinople to a great extent found himself in a position to assume the place of the pope in the

75. Peter Meinhold. *Ökumenische Kirchenkunde*. Stuttgart 1962, p.127

76. *Ibid.*, p. 128

77. Timothy Ware. *The Orthodox Church*. Suffolk 1975, p. 51 f

78. H. Mulert - E.S.Schott. *Konfessionskunde*. Berlin-W.1956, p. 79

Christian world because the only remaining great empire was in Constantinople. 79

With the conversion of Constantine, Constantinople became the second capital after Rome, and Rome itself was handed over to the bishop of Rome and Constantine in 330 left the city for Constantinople, thus preventing the bishop of Rome from dominating the entire Christian world. The council of Constantinople in 381 decided that the bishop of Constantinople should be the next in rank after the bishop of Rome. In the council of Chalcedon 451, it was decided that the bishop of Constantinople should have the same right as the bishop of Rome; the bishop of Rome was allotted an honorary first place. The Western church claimed the authority of St. Peter and that of the East claimed the authority of St. Andrew, the brother of St. Peter, who was called at the same time as Peter (Mk.1,16). 80

The strength of the pope was strengthened by the mere fact that the Roman empire collapsed due to the barbarian invasion and the papacy became the only centre of unity in the west, a historic fact which strengthened the autocratic structure of the Western church and the papacy. The pope to some extent became an absolute monarch set up over the church, the church became very much centralised to an extent unknown in the East. In the Western church, the pope and bishops were seen as monarchs, in the East, the patriarchs governed under the principle of collegiality. Situation and relationship between the two churches worsened as the pope claimed the same absolute authority over the Eastern churches and viewed infallibility as his own prerogative, thanks to the councils of Constantinople and Chalcedon which to some extent settled some of these misunderstandings. In addition to already existing tension, the Nicene-Constantinopolitan Creed was altered. Instead of reading that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father, the Western church changed it to read, "who proceeds from the Father and the Son" (filioque) "procedit a patre filioque". The orthodox churches refused the alteration on the grounds that they were not consulted before the change was made and moreover, they view the changed as unwarranted and false. 81

79. Ibid., p. 80

80. Ibid., p. 81

81. Timothy Ware. a.a.O., p. 58 f

This major dispute was followed by a series of accusations from both sides, and the gradual process of separation was eventually completed by the middle of the 11th. century as the patriarch Leo of Achrida (Macedonia) wrote to the bishop Johann of Trani in S. Italy and once again accused the church of the West of witchcraft etc. In reply, the pope, Leo IX sent his legate, Cardinal Humbert, and two other legates to Constantinople who placed a Bull of Excommunication in the church of the Holy Wisdom at Constantinople. The Bull read that the pope had excommunicated the patriarch of Constantinople, Michael Kerullarios. The patriarch in turn excommunicated the pope. So the year 1054 went into history as the year of complete separation between the Eastern and Western churches.⁸² The situation became almost irreparable by the time of the crusades, when in 1202-1204, the crusaders of the Western church devastated Constantinople, the relation so worsened that some people in the East (at the fall of Constantinople to the Turks) preferred seeing a Turkish turban in the city to a latin mitre.⁸³

From all indication, one can say with certitude that although many factors contributed to the separation of the Western and Eastern churches consisting of theological and non-theological factors; but prominent among the causes is the absolute nature of the church of the West and her claim of a monopoly of the revealed truth.

The Orthodox Theology

The orthodox theology is based on the scripture and the tradition i.e., the revelation of God in the bible and the writings of the church Fathers. Differences in exegesis of the Eastern churches and the Western churches are due to their various origins. The Eastern bible exegesis has its historical origin in Alexandrian catechetical schools while the Western bible exegesis has its own origin in St. Augustine (De doctrina Christiana). The Alexandrian school made much use of allegories and interpreted the relationship between the OT and NT as a relationship where one is the fulfillment of the other. Christ is the fulfillment of the OT, the new Adam, Mary the new Eve.

82. H. Mulert, E. Schott. a.a.O., p. 84

83. Anastasios Kallis. Orthodoxia. Was ist das ? Mainz 1979, p. 22

As Moses raised a snake on a stick in the desert in order to save the sinful Jews so was Christ raised on the cross in order to save the sinful mankind. Such and so many other allegorical teachings were put in hymns and remained so throughout the years. On the other hand, the Western exegesis sought through historical-philosophical methods the historical meaning of the words of the bible. ⁸⁴

Orthodox Christians lay much more emphasis on the experience of God; one has to encounter God, and this encounter is for one life itself, one's relationship with ones fellow men as well as one's own death. Theology then is, the experience of God which one puts into words and is therefore poetic, symbolical, existential and then rational. So, there is practically no difference between the peoples' experience of God and the dogma, between mystic and theology. ⁸⁵

Union with God is sought in mystical ascent, an act which corresponds with Moses' climbing of Mount Sinai. For the orthodox the doctrine of the trinity embodies the doctrine of creation, anthropology, soteriology and ecclesiology; in other words, the entire theology. ⁸⁶

The credo of the First Ecumenical Council of Nicaea in 325 has a prominent place among all articles of belief of the church, it is held as the 'holiest' summary of the apostolic tradition and belief. ⁸⁷

The church is seen as the body of Christ, who is the head of the church; the church is a living organism, a unity symbolising the unity of man with God in Christ. She is seen as a God/human organization or organism, which seeks the unification of man with Christ, a unity which would imply a unity of Christians with one another. Holding on the existence of an invisible church apart from the visible one, the orthodox depict the visible church on earth as a fighting church, a church which has to fight her way through all odds and the invisible church in heaven as the triumphal church made up of the Christians who fought bravely while on earth and are now being rewarded in heaven. With this, the orthodox refute the Catholic doctrine of purgatory as a place of preparation and remission of sins prior to admittance into the invisible church in heaven. Since the church is an everlasting union

84. Friedrich Heyer. *Konfessionskunde*, Berlin 1977, p. 132 f

85. Bernard Sartorius. *Die Orthodoxie*. Genf 1973, pp. 61 ff

86. Friedrich Heyer. *Konfessionskunde*. a.a.O., pp. 153, 156

87. H. Mulert, E.Schott. *Konfessionskunde*. a.a.O., p. 146

with Christ and the Spirit, therefore the church as a whole cannot make mistake, she is then infallible and not the pope or any other individual. The church sees herself as apostolic, in that she lives in the apostolic doctrine, tradition and succession; she sees herself as catholic because the church comprises of the whole universe and depicts the heavenly and earthly hierarchy. 88

The church is further seen as the treasurer, the administrator and transmitter of the justifying and saving grace of God; she alone is regarded as the infallible teacher of the revealed truth, she is called the ecclesia because all were called by her and are assembled together in her. 89

6.2,3

THE REFORMATION

The concept of reformation applied to the church was understood in the late middle ages down to the 16th. century as a church renewal which would affect the leaders and members of the church and not interfering with the dogma, the cult and discipline of the church. Martin Luther and Melancthon thought of a reformation of this kind and actually wanted it, but unfortunately the renewal failed, and therefore became a reformation. 90

As a result of the failure of the renewal as planned, the borders of the church as well as that of the separated church were torn open, and one reformation gave rise to another reformation, a process which has continued till today and there is no prospect that it will ever come to an end. The resulting confessions attempt to correct the already existing confessions, renew the faith and at the same time defend themselves against other competing reformations. 91

Reformation according to Martin Luther (1483-1546), Jean Calvin (1509-1564) and Huldrych Zwingli (1484-1531) is a demand of the restoration of the old truth of the Christian faith and at the same time holds the words of the bible as the norm of all norms of the teaching of the church (Sola scriptura). The reformation was at first seen as an internal religious problem, and it later on became a social-political issue,

88. Peter Meinhold. Ökumenische Kirchenkunde. a.a.O., p. 147 f

89. Panagiotis Bratsiotis. Die Orthodoxe Kirche in Griechischer Sicht. 1. Teil, Stuttgart 1959, p. 85

90. Erwin Iserloh. Geschichte u. Theologie der Reformation im Grundriß. Paderborn 1982, p. 9

91. Ernst W. Zeeden. Die Entstehung der Konfessionen. München 1965, p.7

a situation which the earthly quickly exploited to their own advantage. The national and territorial churches were brought under the control of the kings, princes and dukes who in turn promoted religious renewal which would bring the church fully under their control. On the other hand, the laity used the opportunity to show their grievances to the clergy and the church as an institution. 92

Reformers of the 16th. century were first called protestants in 1529, when the followers of Martin Luther gathered in Speyer. A name protestant, derived from the latin word, protestari, meaning in the first place, to confess or to witness ceremoniously, and in the second place, to protest. 93

Some causes of the Reformation

Among the various factors that contributed to the reformation of the 16th. century was the manner in which the German tribes were Christianized and at the same time baptised in a new culture which they uncritically took in, a culture much more sophisticated than theirs. The commandments and dogma of the church and the culture in which these dogma and practices were conceived were imbibed without reservation, an act which the church thought would give her a universal character.

While the church was both the mother of civilization (education) and religion, the clergy were regarded as teachers who were believed to have an allround knowledge and therefore were looked upon as a superior class of the society. Secularization worked against this trend of event by helping the people to self-consciousness, individual emancipation and a taste for subjectivism, nationalism and Laicism. Secularization in a way brought an end to the tradition and exploitation of the middle ages as well as some of the privileges of the church, and prepared ground for the reformation. 94

Furthermore, the middle ages was characterised by the unending tension between the clergy and the earthly rulers. Some of the churchmen wanted all authority, be it religious or earthly, to be handed over to the church of Rome, who would in turn delegate powers to her subordinates. This craving for absoluteness by the churchmen

92. Rainer Wohlfeil. Reformation oder Frühbürgerliche Revolution ? München 1972, p. 275 f

93. H.Mulert, E.Schott. Konfessionskunde. a.a.O., p. 407

94. Konrad Algreenissen. Konfessionskunde. Paderborn 1966, p. 283 f

contributed a lot to the separation of Eastern and Western churches led to the captivity of the pope and prepared ground for the 16th. century reformation. The pope was then forced to accept the sovereignty of the state over temporal matters and had to fight to be recognized by the temporal rulers who had meanwhile much to say over the affairs of the church. In view of the great authority the earthly rulers had over the people and the church, the church in a way became more decentralised through the establishment of national churches which contributed to the success of the reformation. 95

Other contributing factors to the success of the reformation include the rise of humanism as an alternative to scholasticism, the church's traditional science. Humanism in a way broke the monopoly of scholasticism in the field of knowledge of God, man and philosophy etc., it succeeded in pointing at some truths and realities which the church either did not propound or to some extent contradicted the teaching of the church. 96

Prominent among the humanists in theological discipline was a man called Desiderius Erasmus (1466-1536). He privately interpreted the holy bible, i.e., he interpreted the bible different from the way it was traditionally done in the church. According to him, the words of the bible had to say what the Christian faith should look like. Erasmus criticized the church constructively in order to bring about a reform in the church. In spite of his criticism of the church, he never intended to separate himself from the Catholic church. He rather pleaded for a clear creed, a confession of the faith which would distinctly outline the limits of the faith and distinguish it from all errors of faith. With such constructive criticisms and demands of the church, which later were contributed to the criticisms and demands of Luther of the church, Erasmus and the resurgence of humanism contributed indirectly to the success of the reformation. 97 If the church had accepted the criticism of Erasmus, a loyal Catholic intellectual, she could have either in good time made the criticisms of Luther and his colleagues irrelevant or could have equally accepted

95. Ibid., pp. 284, 285

96. Ibid., p. 285 f

97. Ibid., p. 289 f

the constructive criticisms of Martin Luther and his friends, in both cases preventing the separation of the protestants from the catholic church. Unfortunately, the church held firm in her belief on the absoluteness and the infallibility of the pope in matters and arguments to whose implication the pope had not even given a serious thought, not to talk of a clear teaching on the matter, as the church was rightly accused of.

The private lives of the popes, bishops and the entire clergy was scandalous. With some exceptional individuals, the church was being run as if she was a private estate of a bishop or a pope, morality was at a low level. The church looked like sheep without a shepherd, thus grew the need for a reform. 98

The Confessio Augustana or The Augsburg Confession

After King Carl V in 1529 had successfully ended his war against the French King Francis I and his allies including the pope himself, and had been crowned in 1530 at Bologna by the pope he ordered all the denominations, the Catholics, the Lutherans, the Calvinists and Zwinglians to Augsburg for reconciliation. He saw the reconciliation as necessary not only as a stabilising factor in the empire but also to strengthen the empire against a possible Turkish-moslem invasion. Representatives of the various confessions were expected to put in writing their beliefs. 99

Philipp Melancthon represented the Protestants including the Calvinists and Zwinglians with whom he teamed-up to avoid a Catholic majority, and they jointly approved the documents edited by Melancthon, later to be known as the "Confessio Augustana". 100 The Confessio Augustana was both a document on the division of the church as well as the Magna Carta of the Protestant understanding of the freedom of the gospel and the individual conscience. 101 Protestants themselves saw the document as a presentation of the rightful teaching of the holy catholic and apostolic church; the document was not meant to be

98. Ibid., p. 290 f

99. Peter Gauly. Katholisches Ja zum Augsburger Bekenntnis ?
Freiburg 1980, p. 11

100. Ibid., p. 13

101. Ibid., p. 3

a doctrinal opinion or a theological system of a new church. It represented the Protestant attempt to hold firm on the entire Christian teaching and at the same time emphasise the Protestant belief in the justification by faith. 102

The ecumenical character of the *Confessio Augustana* (CA) makes it a necessary document not only for a better understanding of Protestantism and the supremacy of the bible but also of the beliefs of the Catholic church during the time of the reformation. *Confessio Augustana* not only upholds the Protestant doctrine of 'sole scriptura' and gives the Lutherans an identity but also unites them with other Christians, especially with their fellow Protestants, and prepares them for ecumenism. 103

6.2,4 THE RISE OF ANGLICANISM

If Protestantism came into being while the church and the pope were seen by the Protestant reformers as 'standing above' the gospel and deviated from the gospel, on the other hand, Anglicanism is a consequence of the great authority and power of the kings and earthly rulers over the church and her dogma of Christ. The history of these two confessions illustrate to a great extent the injustice done to the gospel in the middle ages, when it was used as a means for human justification and interest.

It all began as Henry VIII (1509-1547), the king of England, married Catharine of Arragon the wife of his dead brother Arthur. As she did not have a son who would according to the will of Henry ascend the throne after him, Henry therefore decided to declare his marriage with Catharine as null and void so that he could marry Anna Boleyn, his peleece-maid. The king argued that he had had no right to marry the wife of his brother and quoted Lev. 18, 16; 20, 21 and said the dispensation of the pope which had allowed him to marry Catharine was irregular, thus the marriage should be annulled, an opinion which of course Catharine did not share. 104 His argument could not convince the pope, Clement VII, who was bent on seeing the rule of the law triumph over man no matter one's social stand. The king therefore decided to obtain

102. Harding Meyer, Heinz Schütte, *Confessio Augustana; Bekenntnis des einen Glaubens*. Frankfurt 1980, pp.1,3

103. Günther Garmann, *Das Augsburger Bekenntnis*, Deutsch, 1530-1980, Göttingen 1979, pp. 15 ff

104. Dieter Giesen, *Grundlagen u. Entwicklung des Englischen Eherechts in der Neuzeit bis zum Beginn des 19. Jahrhunderts*. Bielefeld 1973, pp. 102 ff

what he wanted by his own power alone; he got most of the clergy and parliament on his side. In 1531, the parliament declared that no-one should ever appeal to Rome any longer. Thomas Cranmer, who was appointed by Henry VIII as the archbishop of Canterbury, declared in 1533 the secret marriage of Henry with Anna Boleyn as legal and valid, after annulling the marriage with Catharine. In 1533, the pope threatened him with excommunication. ¹⁰⁵

In 1534, the parliament promulgated the "Act of Supremacy", which declared the king the only and supreme head on earth of the church of England; the king's authority therefore replaced that of the pope and the archbishop of Canterbury was given full right of dispensation. Although Henry defended the dogma and liturgy of the Roman Catholic church against adulteration, heresies and Protestantism, ¹⁰⁶ the real reason why he remained conservative is not quite clear and his actions remained dubious. But considering the fact that Henry favoured a monarchical rule, which in its nature does not favour new ideas, reforms and revolutionary ideas, so, Henry could have intended to protect his monarchy by insisting on conservatism and loyalty to the 'good' old ideas.

In spite of his good ideas and loyalty to the doctrine and practices of the church, the pope, Clement VII, excommunicated him in 1538. Henry in spite of the excommunication, still saw himself and the church of England of which he was the head as a part of the Catholic church. It was only after his death, when his son Edward VI took over the throne, that Protestant ideas started gaining respectable influence, and the church gradually started moving towards the Protestant camp. ¹⁰⁷

As a result of Anglican rigidity and the discovery of America by the European world, new confessions started growing up. Being persecuted, they had to immigrate to the new world, and spread into the English colonies including Nigeria.

Considering all we have seen, we can therefore say that the history

105. Erwin Iserloh. Geschichte u. Theol. der Reformation. a.a.O., p. 162

106. Konrad Algermissen. Konfessionskunde. a.a.O., p. 478 f

107. Erwin Iserloh. a.a.O., p. 163

of the division of the church depicts the struggle of the spirit of Christ and the gospel to assume an absolute authority over man and not the other way round.

The Protestant reformation made open the irrelevant role which the gospel and the Spirit of Christ had been playing in the church and wanted to turn the trend of events. On the other way round, Anglicanism made clear how influential the kings had become, more especially in matters concerning faith and the church, and also the dangers of imperial authority and influence over the church. The rise of Anglicanism shows how much influence cultural and national influence has in the church, a fact which no one should overlook which may perhaps open a new door towards ecumenism, an ecumenism which starts with the unity of the individual with himself, his society, his state and nation.

6.3,0

WHY A NIGERIAN ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY

We do not intend to make Nigeria a special case nor to construct an ecumenical theology that would be applicable to Nigeria alone. The idea of a Nigerian ecumenical theology is an attempt to unite the Nigerian Christian churches in Christ whom they all confess, a unity in love which would bear witness to Christ. "I do not pray for these only, but also for those who believe in me through their word, that they may be one; even as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be in us, so that the world may believe that thou hast sent me" (Joh.17,20-21).

That Christ prayed that those who believe in him should be one means that plurality and difference embodies the character of the faithful, divergency is a part of the structure of the church. It implies also the catholicity and apostolicity of the church or the body of the faithful which would be made up of people of all races, cultures, social stand and many other personal characteristics which differentiate an individual from every other individual. Human differences are ultimately the works of God's creation, they may differ from one another and at times apparently contradict one another but they all unite in God, their source of being. Only in God and through God can mankind be one without doing harm to anybody. God is the source of

the human natural differences meant to enrich mankind where mankind would be in a position to make use of these differences. Where these differences are accepted, promoted by one another; where people of different races, cultures, temparements, social styles and natures are in unity in love and freedom, one would necessarily have to attribute the unity to God, a unity which indicates the presence of God.

When the believers, the Christians, drawn from all nations, cultures, races, natures etc. are one, irrespective of natural and aquired differences, with no other ulterior motive other than to bear witness to Christ in love and freedom; such a unity will definitely be seen as the work of God, a miracle. A miracle in our eyes, which would only testify the divinity of Christ, because it is only in God that men with various interests and natures could be in unity of love without any other motive other than the glory of God and the well-being of all mankind.

The love that binds people together is no other than the act of giving which enriches both the giver and the receiver without anyone in any way whatsoever suffering injustice as a result of the act. This type of unity would be beneficial to every nation, society and institution.

We intend to apply this notion of unity in God through Jesus Christ in bringing the Nigerian Christians together to bear witness to Christ through good works; a challenge to the Muslims to bear witness to God through Mohammed and the good works they do. For Nigerians, this good work has only one principle object from where other ones might follow, and this principle object is the nation Nigeria, which as we have seen is made up of various ethnic, geographical, historical, cultural, social and political differences. To unite Nigeria in love of God through Christ, so that Nigeria may bear witness to Christ who is God, is the object of a Nigerian ecumenical theology. A unity where people would be ready to freely give and receive without being unjust to any one.

To this end, the theology has to take into consideration Nigeria's present problems and hardship due to disunity, hatred, irresponsibility and ignorance. The theology has also to review the (Nigerian) common ideas, such as the common history, experiences

and interests and of course the traditional religion all of which in a way give Nigerians a common origin, a common problem and fate. These are the characteristics of Nigeria which come to make her to a certain extent unique and peculiar and therefore need an ecumenical theology that grows from the Nigerian soil and is very relevant to the Nigerian situation.

We believe that ecumenical theology starts with a conversion which initiates a reconciliation with oneself; one sees oneself as an image of God who participates in the life of God and sees all other human beings in the same way; one learns to cherish one's society and nation as well as every other person no matter from where one comes. The theology is not specific to any confession, but is catholic in that it embraces all, apostolic in that it is based on the scriptures and apostolic tradition and Nigerian in that it is based on Nigerian experiences, history, culture, religion and interests such as welfare, peace, unity and knowledge. A theology which fosters unity by encouraging good works done to bear witness to Christ; a theology which emphasises the importance of a practicing church rather than a mere believing church.

6.3,1 A NIGERIAN ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY

Theological and non-theological differences cannot be said to be the principle cause of the disunity in the church. Human disposition like intolerance, a claim to the monopoly of the truth and hatred may be said to be the principle cause of the disunity in the church, all of which indicate how irrelevant the spirit of Christ has been taken to be. A true unity cannot come through a mere consensus in doctrinal matters but rather through a change of heart, giving a leadership role to the spirit of Christ received through the hearing and believing in the spoken word of God, a spirit which initiates a conversion of heart, unites one's will with that of Christ and the father. The unity of the church cannot be a product of human thinking and expertise alone, nor could one purposely and consciously establish it. We can only contribute to the unity of the church by indirectly contributing to it through our faith and confidence in Christ which actualises itself in good works and in love, love which as we earlier said is an act of giving which enriches both the giver and the receiver without doing injustice to any third person. Doctrinal discussion could then proceed from such a

disposition of mind, a christocentric love.

A Nigerian ecumenical theology would have to start with the individual who is to be converted to God, be conscious of himself as an image of God and of the creative power of God in him with which is meant to continue the creative activity of God on earth through the examples of Jesus Christ, the perfection of the human image of God, the ideal man. In other words, the theology at first emphasises and recommends a subjective attitude which would help the individual to come to himself, gain self-consciousness, dignity and responsibility as an image of God. From there, one proceeds to the community where one learns to subject one's subjectivism to the interest of the community even where it implies that one has to give up one's position for the sake of the common good which should exclude no one. For a Nigerian, the village community and family would be the first institution where one learns how to go about with one's subjectivism and this falls within the realm of culture and tradition which of course includes religion.

A church in Nigerian sense has the duty of presenting Christ to man as the ideal man, the perfection of humanity and the Son of God who humiliated himself by becoming man and subjected himself to positions which most of us would not like experience. That he did in order to raise man from man's fallen nature, where man was subjected either by his fellow human beings or he subjected himself through sin; and to raise the fallen man without exception to his divine, natural dignity as an image of God.

Christ continued where the prophets of old stopped, fulfilled the prophets and the law, He did not necessarily bring some new law or teaching but perfected the old and made it christocentric and thereby redeeming it from human selfish interpretation. For the truth-seeking Jews, he was both the summary of the OT as well as of the Jewish ancestry.

Nigerian churches should have a common end of evangelisation, namely, to turn every Christian into another Christ, someone who would continue the work of Christ on earth by subjecting one-self to the will of the spirit of Christ. As Christ was a continuation of the Jewish tradition and law so also should a Nigerian Christian be with

the aim of making all things christocentric; he should see Christ as an ancestor who if he had been a Nigerian would also have perfected Nigerian culture, tradition and laws. A Christian should reconcile all things in God as Christ did because all things have their beginning in God. It is on our way to God that human complexities, pluralities and differences are eliminated. God is the only absolute in whom we participate, he is the source of life as well as the perfection of life which we share with one another and with all created things. Nigerian and African theology and philosophy, whose aim is a maximization of Life, a principle we call "Vitalism", can only have their fulfillment in God the giver of life which we in various ways give one another in order to enrich one another, a life which is perfected in Christ, the Son of God and the perfection of humanity.

Nigerian ecumenical theology is an interconfessional spirituality through which one is converted to Christ, put on the identity of Christ, bears witness to Christ through one's life, seeks dialogue with the traditional religion and Islam through one's good works which bear witness to Christ and frees man from bondage, exploitation and oppression, all to the greater glory of God.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A NIGERIAN ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY, AN AFRICAN (NIGERIAN) THEOLOGY?

7.1,1 AFRICAN (CHRISTIAN) THEOLOGY

Theology as the science of faith, reflects the revelation of God and thereby methodically enlightens, elucidates and nourishes the faith,¹ our human response to the divine revelation of God. God's revelation is a human vision of what man ought to be as well as what God Himself is. A theologian sees such a vision as a challenge on the individual and the entire mankind to which the individual should respond by identifying himself more and more with the object of the revelation which is Christ in whom the father revealed Himself. Theology as the science of faith, the response of the individual or group to the revelation of God, has the responsibility of reviewing not only the object of the faith but also the subject of the faith which is man himself. Theology as a science reflects on the interdependence of revelation of God and man,² the image of God, the receiver of the word of God as well as the society where the faith is received and accomplished.

One may therefore talk of a group, national or cultural orientated theology which illustrates a peoples effort to accomplish the gospel among the individuals and in the society. In this sense, one can consider an African or Nigerian theology as an attempt by Africans to accomplish the words of God in the continent and among all mankind.

African theology, like African economic and political science is meant to enrich Africans spiritually and intellectually by making use of that which the people already possess which is developed, modernised and finalised in Christ, the perfection of mankind. Just as the faith of the early christians to a large extent influenced the contents of the gospel³ and the epistles so also is the faith

1. Karl Rahner. Herders Theologisches Taschenlexikon. Bd.7. Freiburg 1973, p. 238

2. Karl Rahner. Mysterium Salutis. Bd.2, Köln 1967, p. 408
Karl Rahner. Grundkurs des Glaubens. a.a.O., p. 37

3. E.Schillebeeckx. Jesus. Die Geschichte von einem Lebenden. Freiburg 1975, p. 14

of the church and the society to a large extent responsible for the faith of the future generation.

African theology is an attempt to realize the kingdom of God and its perfection among Africans. A kingdom where the Godhood of the father of Jesus Christ and of mankind would be acknowledged and respected, a kingdom where God would be God and man would remain man, a relationship which would lead to the salvation of mankind. The kingdom of God in which Christ lived and preached, had much to say about the nature of God and His relationship with man and as well had much to say about man himself and his relationship with God. In other words, the kingdom of God according to Jesus is a theological and anthropological experience of the reality,⁴ which is meant to be the starting point of an African theology. An experience of man as the highest and most sacred creature of God on earth, who unfortunately is not yet that which he is supposed to be. African theology is concerned with the realities which hinder the Africans from being that which they are supposed to be, namely, dignified creatures of God on earth, which is the aim of humanity as well as its perfection which is Christ himself. African theologian sees theology as a means of development and upliftment of man, he sees theology as many other theologians do as the science of reality which attempts to elucidate the reality of revelation.⁵ Faith comes through the hearing of the word and the revelation of God in words, in history and in the present, theology is then the awareness of God's supremacy and the reflection on this awareness. Christian theology of which African theology is a part, is the Christian faith in human reflection.⁶

As a reflection on theological and anthropological experiences of man, African theology has much to do with God who can be seen as an object of philosophical inquiry. African theology like other aspects of Christian theology can also have a philosophical inquiry as a method⁷ because God remains to the Africans and to mankind as the

4. Ibid., p. 126

5. E. Schillebeeckx. Offenbarung und Theologie. Mainz 1965, p. 86

6. Ibid., p. 87

7. Joseph Ratzinger. Theologische Prinzipienlehre. München 1982, p. 332

Great Unknown, who chooses to remain unknown in spite of man's cordial experience of Him and His revelation in Jesus, His Son. A philosophical inquiry which is seen as a means and not as an end, a means of reconciling theology with other aspects of science and human life.

We do not intend to make African theology look like a philosophical inquiry or speculation. God is not the object of a mere philosophical or speculative inquiry. As St. Paul puts it, ... "Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world? the world did not know God through wisdom, it pleased God through the folly of what we preach to save those who believe" (1 Cor. 1, 20 f). The cross of Christ which the apostles preached was the folly of the world, the crucified Christ was a stumbling block to the Jews and a folly to the Gentiles, but to those who are called both Jews and Gentiles, "Christ is the power of God and the wisdom of God" (1 Cor. 1, 23, 24). The passion of Christ, the Son of God who was crucified thwarted all the previous philosophical concepts of God and the Jewish theology of history,⁸ after all God's own way is not our way. Philosophy will therefore play a subordinate role as a method of theology, it has to be a help in the reflection of the already acquired faith, to enlighten and strengthen the existing faith.

The churches in Africa brought in the word of God and preached it to the people, as a result, Africans were converted to Christ and to the culture and tradition in which the word was preached. In other words, Africans were not only converted to Christ but also assumed the result of the reflection on the faith of people who live in a quite a different condition of life as the Africans, consequently, the proclaimed word became in many circumstances irrelevant. It is therefore the duty of African theology to make the proclaimed word relevant in all situations in which Africans find themselves and of course the relevance of the word depends on its liberating character.

Since almost all African theologians belong to different Christian denominations, their 'theologies' have to be loyal to their various churches in which they had their experience of God. The history

8. Ludwig Hödl. Neuansätze in der Dogmatischen Christologie. in: Tendenzen der Katholischen Theologie nach dem Zweiten Vatikanischen Konzil. Hrg. G. Kaufmann, München 1979, p. 35

of the church and theological development is an account of the effort of the church^{to} particularise and realize the word of God among all mankind. So, African theology, following the history of the 'internalization' and 'inculturation' of Christianity is an incarnation of the word of God among Africans, it is not a 'break-away' from the churches but a result of the efforts of the churches. Common experiences and problems make African theologians reflect similarly on faith and Church. The traditional problem of the African theologian is the side effects of colonialism and its consequence of which he is also a victim. Therefore he endeavours to eliminate in the theology he inherited all traces of foreign culture, through a system he calls 'Africanization'.⁹

African theologies have been since the 1960's a defence of the Black man's theological acumen to comprehend the European theology and even to reproduce it, a defence against the alleged 'African incomprehensibility of European theology'. Later the question arose of the possibility of an African Theology. Is such a theology possible? If yes, are the Africans capable of it? This underrated statement in a way promoted and encouraged the present-day semi-apologetic African theological tendencies which form a part of the theology of incarnation as well as theology of inculturation, just as it forms the basis of philosophical tendencies like Negritude.¹⁰ As a result African theologies tend to be generally academic as Bénézet Bujo rightly pointed out; academic in that the African theologian attempts to re-articulate the gospel message articulated in European categories in African cultural categories, in which case one would not expect it to have as its essence social themes and situational phenomena like refugees problem, poverty and other social ills. Since these ills are not our way of life nor our tradition but side effects of the neglect of our positive and edifying way of life like community consciousness and love of sharing and traditions, they can therefore not be the essence or the back-bone of African theology, but a purpose of African theology.

9. John S. Pobee. *Tendenzen der Afrikanischen Theologie*, a.a.O., p.201

10. O.R. Dathorne. *African Literature in the Twentieth Century*, Heinemann, London 1976, p. 218 f

We see with Bénézet Bujo analyses of African theology and theologians in many points, but we do not agree with him in generalizing some shortcomings of African theologians and theologies e.g., denying the contextual nature of many African theological tendencies, and seemingly forgetting the many achievements made in the field of pastoral and liturgical theology by many local churches more especially the African indigenous churches. Bujo may be comparing African theological aims with the South African and Latin American Liberation theology, an offspring of the social class system and the inhuman exploitation of a group by another group, a system like the apartheid system in South Africa which everybody including the world Council of Churches describes as sinful (by the word 'everybody' we mean African theologians) which as such do not exist in other parts of African nor does the case arise where land is owned by a few. Therefore the basis of the two theological tendencies cannot be the same, but must have the same topic in that the two systems are theologies of oppressed and exploited men.

As he rightly pointed out, African theology cannot indiscriminately adopt all ancestral traditions; no serious theologian is ready to do that as far as we know. We do not see the great danger of an African theology in becoming an export or prestige theology since it aims at the incarnation and inculturation of the gospel message as it is recommended in the documents of the second Vatican council, a work which is in its nature particular and unique. Nor do the African theologians have the aim of 're-converting Europeans', but rather make the mistake of trying to tell the Europeans, as it seems to be, 'you see we can do it', as a response to colonial and post-colonial underestimation of the capability of the African. He is right in saying that African theology should articulate itself in the 'language' of the people, and should not only be a teaching system but also a 'learning from the simple man's system of thought'. There are indeed many problems facing African theology and theologians as Bujo rightly pointed out. ¹¹

11. Bénézet Bujo. Themen und Meinungen, in: Herder Korrespondenz Heft 2, 37.Jg., Febr. 1983, Freiburg i.Br. p.76 ff

Nevertheless Africans need a theology which does not aim at re-interpreting European philosophical/theological thoughts and expressions, a theology which would enable the black man to encounter and experience the love of God born into the African culture to redeem the Africans.¹² A theology that would not only decolonize but also de-materialize the African value system and consciousness which has corruption and other social ills as consequences. A theology that would reconcile the African with himself, with one another, with the community and culture as well as with nature. That is why we would suggest a theology of inculturation that aims at a reconciliation based on African past experiences, history, tradition and the gospel with the aim of providing the people with a mental and spiritual guide to the overcoming of their present day dilemmas and woes as well as preparing them for the future.¹³ Such a theology of reconciliation could provide a new consciousness that would bridge the gap between the clergy and the laity, between theory and practice, because the theological principles would be based on pastoral work instead of on pastoral theology. It could perhaps bridge the gap between the rich and the poor, because pastoral work implies living the gospel life instead of preaching the gospel only. If the church could achieve only this it would definitely be in a position to lead a nation out of many of its problems both moral and social and be in the position to make sacrifices for the liberation of the oppressed people of South Africa. We shall definitely need such a theology for the economic redemption of the African peoples e.g., Nigeria, by bridging the gap between the spiritual value and the material values of the people, which are responsible for corruption, bribery, ethnicism, religious intolerance and the lack of national consciousness and identity. During Pope Paul VI's first visit to Africa as pope on the 31st July 1969 in Uganda, he announced to the thousands of African Christians and church leaders:

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12. Redemption: Redemption here does not only mean or stand for spiritual redemption alone but also for all social ills including economic dependence & ignorance.
 13. Reconciliation: A theology of Reconciliation which presupposes the presence of alienation that creates a barrier between man and God, man himself, the culture and one another.

The expression, that is, the language and mode of manifesting this one faith may be manifold, hence it may be original, suited to the tongue, the style, the character, the genius, and the culture of the one who professes this faith. From this point of view, a certain pluralism is not only legitimate, but desirable. An adaptation of the Christian life in the fields of pastoral, ritual, didactic and spiritual activities is not only possible, it is ever favoured by the church. The Liturgical renewal is a living example of this. And in this sense you may and you must have an African Christianity. Indeed you possess human values and characteristic forms of culture which can rise up to perfection such as is found in Christianity, and for Christianity, a true superior fullness, and prove to be capable of a richness of expression all its own and genuinely African. ¹⁴

With this speech of Pope Paul VI, and the statement of Vatican II, which encouraged the young churches to borrow things from their respective customs and traditions which 'can contribute to the glory of their Creator, the revelation of the Savior's grace, or the proper arrangement of Christian life. ¹⁵

Theology and Christianity took new steps in Africa; theologians started to propose an Africanized theology, some talk of a contextualized theology, and in Southern Africa, where Africans are still being exploited, oppressed and discriminated against - a theology of liberation is highly advocated as most relevant.

Carvalho Emilio, the president of the ecumenical Union of Third World Theologians, and the Bishop of the United Methodist Church of Angola, says that African Christology can only be understood on the basis of African religiosity and theology. He does not see anything like polytheism and atheism in African religious thought, and states that the God of Africa is the same God as the God of the bible.

14. Paul VI, *Le Voyage de Paul VI en Ouganda*, Vatican 1969, p.64 ff

15. Walter Abbott. *The Documents of Vatican II*, Geoffrey Chapman, London 1967, p. 612

Emilio therefore calls for a decolonization and Africanization of the good news of the bible, just as it is being done in the independent churches of Africa, so that the African Christ, the elder brother, the liberator, the black Christ, the human Jesus and the almighty Lord, the first ancestor and the mediator of the human family, may come to solve African problems. ¹⁶

Such an urgent call for an indigenization of the church and theology could definitely be made up to date by the prospects of an African theology of inculturation as it is being envisaged by Bujo Bénézet, a professor at the theological faculty in Kinshasa. Bujo warns African theologians of the danger of a theology which is built and orientated to the African past at the cost of African present day problems such as injustice, disrespect of human rights, and exploitation of all kinds. He at the same time warns against a theology that would incorporate the incarnation of the ancestors. The new African theology, he says, must be incarnated in the African soil so that it could solve African social and economic problems. He as well emphasises that the efforts of the traditional culture must be accompanied by a more human social, economic and political life. ¹⁷

One could hear among many Nigerian theologians the same cry for an indigenization, contextualization and inculturation of Christianity, in order to meet specific African demands.

Uzukwu E. Elochukwu calls for an African liturgical rite. He argues that the church had many liturgies until the middle ages when the liturgies were centralized with no regard of the fact that there could be unity in plurality. From this historical fact, that the church in her early stage comfortably accommodated liturgies, Pope Paul VI and Pope John Paul II appealed for an Africanization of the liturgy. Fr. Uzukwu therefore appeals for an authentic African liturgy, and then goes on to make his own contribution and suggestion for an African liturgical rite. ¹⁸

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16. E.J.M.Carvalho. Who is Jesus for Africa today? What do the Africans say Jesus is? *Africa Theological Journal* 10, 1981, I.p.27 ff; II.p.17 ff
17. Bénézet Bujo. Dangers de Bourgeoisie dans la Theologie Africaine. Un examen de conscience, *Select* /1982, p. 8 ff
18. Uzukwu E.Elochukwu. African Right to be Different. Christian Liturgical rites and African rites, *Bulletin de Theologie Africaine* IV, 1982, p. 87 ff

According to Okolo Chukwudum, the African clergy have come to realize that the African church is a carbon copy of the church in Europe and North America and that its Christianity is a westernized christianity. He (the African clergy) has also come to understand that for him to be 'alter Christus' (another Christ), he therefore has to incarnate Christianity in the local culture, in other words to see Christ as an African or through the eyes of the Africans. He therefore proposes a theology of liberation, a sort of decolonialization theology, and goes further to say:

decolonization is a gateway to a new being, a new and true mode of African existence. It is a liberation theology since it is grounded in the theological vocation of the African to free himself and his mode of religious worship from all super-imposed culture and its alienating ideals. ¹⁹

In an article from Ezeanya, titled ' The contribution of African traditional religion to nation-building', he says the traditional religion has improved the basic religious and moral structure 'for constructing a solid national edifice' which the people as a nation need. Although he admits the possibility of the existence of unhealthy elements in the traditional religion, but goes on to say that the traditional religion 'has still in its basic traditional beliefs and practices enough salutary elements with which it is ready to meet other religions in a fraternal spirit of fruitful dialogue to reconstruct this nation'. ²⁰

African theology is a product of human consciousness, consciousness of African economic, political, cultural and religious disadvantages which are aggravated by racial prejudices. Such awareness is responsible for the existence of African theology which is a response to these disadvantages and prejudices. A response and a reaction made in the awareness of the will of God for mankind, namely, that man should have the fulness of life through the works and teachings of His son.

19. Chudwudum Barnabas Okolo. Towards Decolonizing the Church. An African Liberation Theology, Tabansi, Onitsha 1976, p. 9 ff

20. Stephen Ezeanya. The Contribution of African Traditional Religion to National Building. in: Nigerian Dialogue, vol.3, Nsukka 1979, p. 18

God's plan and intention for every individual is no other than life, freedom, joy, peace and the salvation which is the infinite happiness for every one, in other words, the will of God for man is the welfare of man.²¹ There may be various expressions of this awareness in theological language which as a result present African theology in various forms (theologies). These forms or theological tendencies are attempts to actualise the redemptive and the liberating words of Christ meant for all mankind whereby human experience plays a dominant role. Without this experience the words of Christ and the works of the Holy Spirit would not be relevant. Among the various directions and expressions of African theology, one can name African liberation theology, the Black theology and the inculturation theology as the most prominent. A close examination of these theologies indicate not only their common intention but also the similarity in their subject and object matter.

According to Justin Ukpong, the three main theologies of Africa deal with issues that have something to do with the fundamental concepts of African quest of freedom and life. Black theology, according to him, "affirms life at the social level for the African". Social and natural life are for Africans products inseparable and sacred. While Liberation theology has to do with "life and the acutalization of it in the socio-economic sphere"; inculturation theology "affirms and expresses life as it should be lived within the cultural context".

From all indications a relevant African theology has to be life and freedom oriented,²² in other words, the theology has to be a means and not an end, a means of being what one is supposed to be according to the creative will of God, in whose image man was made. African theology is a reflection on the gospel of Christ from an African point of view, the theology reviews all the questions which African christian communities ask and gives answers which reflect African faith and convictions.²³

21. Hans Küng. Christ Sein. München 1980, p. 298

22. Justin S.Ukpong.Theology. The Emergence of African Theologies. in: Theological Studies,Sept.1984, vol.45,No.3, pp.531 ff

23. O.Bimwenyi-Kweshi. Alle Dinge erzählen von Gott.Freiburg 1982,p.173

Another important element of African theology is the role of the community or the society in the process of evangelisation and growth of the faith. Traditionally, there exist no difference between society and religious community, for religion is an essential part of the culture. Morality and other ethical ideals are products of the community and therefore have their finality and purpose in the welfare and interest of the community and not in individual welfare alone. Since African cultural values are enacted as a communal necessary corporate moral engagement and responsibility, ²⁴ African theology cannot do without African traditional moral values nor should it be an individualistic interpretation and analysis of the gospel and the present situation of the people which might not serve the welfare of the people as a community with spiritual and material needs. According to the late Bishop Zwane of South Africa, " The African Church (theology) must be existential yet pilgrim. She should address herself to the current African problems of human development and help to come up with African solutions. At the same time the church should insist that man does not live by bread alone". ²⁵ This could be regarded as the summary of African theological reflection and expressions. Another point the Bishop emphasised was the need for justice in the church, he said, " If the church had not missed the justice aspect, not just talked about it but actually practised it (fight and die for it), Marx would never have said in 1848 that religion was the opium of the people". ²⁶ African traditional communities are held together by a common sense of justice which are believed to be sanctioned by the deities and the ancestors. These are the few points which unify African theological expressions, facts which compel one to speak of an African theology instead of theologies. The same reason which compels one to speak of African religion instead of African religions, namely, the similarity and identity of the object of worship, manner of worship, the believes and the peoples relationship with the object of worship, the peoples relationship with one another and with the dead, all these

24. Joshua W.Sempebwa. African Traditional Moral Norms and Their Implication for Christianity. St.Augustin 1983, p. 37

25. Mandlenkhosi Zwane. A Man for All People. London 1983, p. 30 f

26. Ibid., p. 36

compels one to speak of African theology instead of African theologies. Of course one has to give in that situation has changed the object and subject matter in that no one would describe today's African Christianity as a continuation or modernization of African traditional religion.

From all we have seen, one could talk of an African ecumenical theology thereby restricting the word ecumenism within the sphere of an African theological reflection and the African science of Faith. Looking at the structures and practices of the various Christian denominations in Africa, one sees that the churches are still far away from the spirit of ecumenism and from the aspirations of African theology. We consider African theology a necessary result for an African ecumenism, where one sees ecumenism the way we have described it in the last Chapter of our work.

Jürgen Moltmann writes on the transition of theology from denominationalism to ecumenism, a transition which would need an ecumenical thinking which implies that one has to raise particular thinking to universal thinking, whereby one would no longer consider one's own particularity as the totality. Theological texts have to be considered from their importance to Christianity and no longer on their denominational relevance.²⁷

Hans Küng defines ecumenical theology as the theology which sees other theologies as partner and no longer as opponents, a theology which does not insist on the separation but on efforts to understand the others.²⁸ As long as African theologians consider problems in any region of Africa as a general problem for Africans which would demand a theological solution, African theology would be demonstrating its inseparability from ecumenism, more especially secular ecumenism. Quite unlike ecumenism in Europe, African ecumenism is an integral part of African theology, one cannot speak of an existential and relevant African theology without implying an African ecumenism. As we said earlier, the denominations in Africa would be ecumenical in nature the moment they occupy themselves with the

27. Jürgen Moltmann. *Theologie im Übergang - Wohin?* in: Hans Küng, David Tracy. *Theologie - Wohin?* Köln 1984, p. 28

28. Hans Küng, David Tracy. *Theologie - Wohin?* *ibid.*, p. 68

existential problems and needs of the people which include the obstacles between the people and God. The more theology is made relevant to African situation and problems the more ecumenical and African the theology would be, doctrinal differences would be eliminated by interpreting the existing dogmas, teachings and traditions in African "language and concepts". African theology and ecumenism are not against any of the Christian denominations nor would they like to see any of them uprooted, but rather African theology and ecumenism are efforts to actualise and incarnate the divine message which the churches brought to Africans. African theology is a necessary consequence of the theology of the Second Vatican Council, which urged the Christians to update the Christian life by using the word "Aggiornamento," so, African, theology and ecumenism are "Aggiornamento " of the Christian message in the world of Africans of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries. African theology and ecumenism should be Africa's answer to the call for a transition of theology from eurocentric to anthropocentric theology, which would imply that theologies should have an open borders and each should consider itself as a part of the whole. ²⁹ According to Bishop Zwane of South Africa, the first task of the African church is to work-out a theory of human development based on the bible laying emphasis on social justice. Evangelisation should aim at bringing the good news into all strata of humanity in order to transform man from within and make him new. ³⁰ He describes the church in his home land, Swaziland, as a " slave church", a term which could be used for so many African churches. According to the Bishop, the church in Swaziland is imprisoned by her Italian origin, enslaved by its colonial appearance in terms of structure and personnel (the liturgy, music, architectural structure, decoration, life style, etc. are colonial) and rendered ineffective by the church law. ³¹ The Bishop called attention to the artificial and colonial nature of many African churches, in other words, the African church has to free herself from eurocentrism and incarnate

29. Jürgen Moltmann. *Theologie im Übergang*. a.a.O., p. 28

30. Mandlenkholi Zwane. *A Man for All the People*. a.a.O., p.16

31. *Ibid.*, p. 26 f

herself in Africa. He calls for a Liberation theology, a theology that would liberate the African church from eurocentrism and the African man from inhumanity, sin and social injustice. He appeals for a theology of inculturation that would be an extension of the Liberation theology and at the same time a Black theology. Although the Bishop did not formulate his appeal the way we have presented it but we see the above statements as necessary results of his ideas of an authentic African church.

The question would now be how the African church and theology would have to free themselves from eurocentrism. African church and theology cannot do that without ecumenism which starts with the existential needs of the people which cut across denominational borders. Thus we see ecumenism as an indispensable component of African theology. The quest of African welfare in both spiritual and material life should be the criterion of an African theology including all the disciplines of theology.

One should not suppose that African theology opposes other theologies in other parts of the world or would jeopardise Christianity in any way; African theology and ecumenism would rather complement the theologies found in other parts of the Christian world and thereby makes Christianity more authentic and relevant.

As Schleiermacher said, " just as there is nothing more irreligious as to demand a uniformity among mankind; so also is nothing more unchristian as to seek a uniformity in religion". ³²

African ecumenism and theology are attempts to further and actualise Christianity in all its forms whereby the spirit of Christ plays the principal role.

What we shall next consider is how an African ecumenical theology will have to see other disciplines of theology such as moral theology, liturgy, church law etc. which are till today eurocentric.

7.2,1 A NIGERIAN (AFRICAN) ECUMENICAL THEOLOGY AND OTHER THEOLOGICAL DISCIPLINES

We have taken Nigerian ecumenical theology as a typical example of an African ecumenical theology; what is historically, culturally, religiously and socially applicable and evident in Nigeria is to a large extent applicable and evident in many African nations. We therefore regard our concept of a Nigerian ecumenical theology as an

African ecumenical theology at large.

It is true that an ecumenical theology would be incomplete if it does not aim at doctrinal unity and understanding. To that end we shall be reviewing the aims of theological disciplines and their relevance to African/Nigerian situation. The first we are going to consider is that which is meant to be the end of our spiritual and material endeavour, namely, the theological treatise on the most perfect and ideal man, Jesus Christ, the word of God who took flesh.

CHRISTOLOGY.

The word of God which had always been with God and through whom He created all that exist, the power of God which made itself conceivable by taking human form; whereby, the universal particularised itself, the infinite made itself finite. This is the mystery of the incarnation of Christ. African ecumenical theology likewise attempts to particularise and thereby realize the word of God; in this process the universal and infinite words of the gospel is particularized, made definite and realized. Jesus is the word of God which took flesh and is therefore God Himself because the word and power of God cannot be any other thing which is not God Himself nor could the word and power of God be separated from God. As one in whom the word of God took flesh, Jesus was a man like every other man but differed from every other man in that the word of God which is the will and interest of God became through his own effort and self-denial God's own will and interest (Joh.4,32-34) and therefore did not do any thing contrary to the will of God, thus was without sin. Man as an image of God must have been in some way from the beginning of time with God. As a realisation of the creative power and word of God through which all things were created, man is therefore the word and power of God which took flesh. He is at the same time a being in whom the power and word of God could be continued, where one like Jesus unites ones will with God's. Jesus' human nature is the perfection of humanity, the model of humanity and man's relationship with God. Being the model and ideal personality for mankind, he is not destined to be the only " word of God which took flesh" nor to be the only person who would live in perfect union with God.

If not, he would have wasted his time asking his followers to follow his example. Following his example means no other than being like him and being what he is which is what the father is, he urged his followers to be perfect like God Himself. Nigerian/African ecumenical theology sees in the historical Jesus the perfection of God's self revelation and His invitation on mankind to be what He is and at the same time remain what they are. There is only one historical Jesus from where other Christs emanate and have their genuineness. Just as Jesus was not a saviour and a redeemer of himself but of his people for whom he was in the first place sent and for all mankind, so also should every other Christ be a saviour and redeemer of his own community and the entire human race. Such a responsibility demands a perfect union with God and with the historical Jesus, the son of God; a fact which implies a denial or submission of one's self to the will of God as Jesus did. We regard this fact as the purpose of theology and the aim of all her disciplines.

Pastoral theology has the responsibility of guiding and leading one to Christ, the son of God, it prepares the ground for the individual to encounter and experience God as He is and be able to interact with God as a good father.

Moral theology regulates human interaction and therefore cannot be (as far as Africans are concerned) reduced to autonomous rights or moral laws which are dependent on the conscience and knowledge of the individuals alone. Moral laws have to be based on the teachings of Christ and on the demand he made on his followers to love one another (Joh. 13,34-35), to forgive one another (Mt.18, 32-35; 18,22; Lk. 17,3-4; Mt.6,14-15) and to love God above all (Mt.10,37). Moral theology helps one to create a conscience which makes one constantly aware of the responsibility one bears towards one's neighbour and the duty to be one another's keeper as Christ was, a conscience that would remind one that it is better to serve than to be served. The starting point of moral theology is the reality that man is the image of God and is therefore sacred, he shares in God's freedom and have inalienable rights and dignity which even God Himself respects.

Liturgy regulates the communal worship of God and at the same time creates room for individual and community expression of their experiences of God. Liturgy has to do with a community's reaction to Gods revelation, a reaction which comprises of marvel, trust, love and worship and at the same time binds the people together to share not only their experiences of God but also their sufferings and joy. Liturgy strengthens ones desire to be in union with God.

We believe that every aspect of theology has the responsibility to direct one to Christ, the perfection of humanity and the ideal man.

Ecumenical theology as we see it gathers christians of all confessions together in love to continue the good works of Christ and God his father who has always preferred social justice in the place of sacrifice and offerings. Any one who does the work of Christ belongs to Christ and all who belong to Christ belong to one another and are one in plurality.

An African theology has to be an ecumenical theology in order to merit the name African theology, in order to merit the name theology. All other theological disciplines must possess the capability to direct one to Christ and help one to live in union with God, and, to be another Christ.

In all, we see a Nigerian/African ecumenical theology as a criterion of an African or Nigerian theology. It is unlike ecumenical theology elsewhere which is a mere theological discipline like moral-pastoral theology etc., African/Nigerian ecumenical theology is the general outlook of African/Nigerian theology, an African theologian can simply not avoid it, it is the key-way to unity and growth of African spirituality and material welfare.

KAPITEL EINS:

NIGERIA - EINE KONVERGENZ DER VERSCHIEDENHEIT

Da die Existenz der Vielfalt, innerhalb derer einzelne Komponenten sich oft widersprechen, den Menschen leicht durcheinander bringen, fühlt sich der Mensch gezwungen, eine hierarchische Ordnung innerhalb der Pluralität zu schaffen. Zu diesem Zweck gebrauchte man die Philosophie und Theologie - und mißbrauchte sie oft. Die Suche nach dem Sein des Seienden, welches die hinter allem stehende Vernunft darstellt, führt zu Religion und Weltanschauung, die verschiedene Antworten bieten. Ebenso wie man an Gott glaubt, der alles erschaffen hat, so glaubt man auch, einen Schlüssel zu finden, der alle Türen öffnet - auch die Türe, die zu Gott führt. Daher kam die Menschheit zu einem stark monistisch geprägten Denksystem. Wir sind der Meinung, daß die Existenz der Vielfalt in der Natur keinen Widerspruch im negativen Sinne, sondern eine Ergänzung darstellt, da es ohne den Widerspruch, ohne das Gegenteil, keinen Fortschritt und keine Wahrheit geben wird. Meistens sind die Wahrheiten, die wir besitzen, abhängig von den Situationen, in denen wir sie erkennen; ändert sich die Situation, wird auch die entsprechende Wahrheit sich ändern. Als Ausnahme hierzu dürfen nur die Wahrheiten betrachtet werden, die unabhängig von uns und von den Situationen bestehen - wie Gott.

Psychologen meinen, daß ein Mensch dann eine ausgeglichene Persönlichkeit erlangt, wenn es ihm gelingt, seine verschiedenen Instinkte und Triebe unter ein Dach zu bringen, mit anderen Worten - wenn es ihm gelingt, eine Harmonie zwischen den Trieben und Instinkten zu schaffen. Eine unausgeglichene Persönlichkeit entsteht nur dann, wenn es der Person nicht gelingt, die Triebe und Instinkte miteinander in Harmonie zu bringen. Dies geschieht nur, wenn der Mensch die Instinkte unterdrückt anstatt sie miteinander zu harmonisieren. Auf diese Weise schafft der Mensch Unordnung in sich selbst. Dasselbe gilt auch für das Universum, wenn man versucht, die Vielfalt und Pluralitäten im Universum zu unterdrücken.

Wir plädieren darum für einen Pluralismus, für eine Vielfalt, in der die Einzelnen einander ergänzen und dadurch zu einer gemeinsamen Wahrheit kommen; also für einen "abgemachten Monismus" anstelle eines Monismus, in dem ein Ding das andere verrückt oder für nichtig erklärt. Wir werden zunächst sehen wie Nigeria von diesem Problem betroffen ist.

Das auffallendste Merkmal der nigerianischen Vielfalt und Verschiedenheit zeigt sich auf dem Gebiet der natürlichen und physiogeographischen Gegebenheiten - Gegebenheiten wie die Vegetation, der Niederschlag und die Temperatur. Die verschiedenen Auswirkungen dieser Merkmale in den verschiedenen Regionen Nigerias verursachen die anscheinenden Verschiedenheiten im Wesen der Kultur und in der Einstellung der Völker Nigerias. In der Realität schafft diese Variabilität in der Natur keine Differenzen, sondern Abwechslungen, die in einander fließen und sich gegenseitig abrunden. Diese Vielfalt in der Natur kann in der Wirklichkeit keine Vielfalt innerhalb der Bevölkerung bewirken, da diese scheinbare Vielfalt in der Natur nur verschiedene Aspekte derselben Sache darstellt, ebenso wie die scheinbaren Unterschiede, die unter der Bevölkerung zu finden sind, nur verschiedene Aspekte derselben Menschen aufzeigen.

Sicher bestehen keine Unterschiede in der Bevölkerung, die von klimatischen und anderen geographischen Faktoren begünstigt wurden, Faktoren, die zur nigerianischen Realität gehören und das allgemeine Bild Nigerias prägen. Für Nigeria sind all diese Vielfalt und Verschiedenheit zur Existenz notwendig. Das Problem besteht nur darin, daß viele Nigerianer diese notwendige Vielfalt und ihren konstruktiven Charakter übersehen und nur daran denken, was es für sie als Gruppe sowie als Einzelne, die miteinander konkurrieren, bedeutet.

Die ethnischen Gruppierungen Nigerias bilden ein Musterbeispiel der Pluralität - eine Pluralität innerhalb des Begriffs "Nigerianer". In Folge dessen verfiel man bei der Suche nach dem wahren "Nigerianer" der Tendenz zur Unterdrückung jegliches Ungleichen, anstatt das Ungleiche als eine Ergänzung zu verstehen. Wir sehen Nigeria als ein Musterbeispiel der Fehlentwicklung und des Mißbrauchs des konstruktiven Reichtums der Pluralität - wie wir bald sehen werden.

Die Aufgabe der Religion in dieser Situation wäre es, eine Gemeinschaft im Glauben an Gott, der alles geschaffen hat, zu fördern - aber, wie wir noch sehen werden, hat die Religion die existierende Disharmonie und Uneinigkeit erst geschaffen. Die Geschichte Nigerias beweist eine Einheit und Gemeinsamkeit in der Erfahrung, die die Identität der Nigerianer prägt. Die Geschichte zeigt das Ideal der Verkenntung des Vorteils der Vielfalt und der Verschiedenheit innerhalb Nigerias und der Nigerianer. Nigeria ist ein Land, in dem unterschiedliche ethnische Gruppen zwangsweise nebeneinander bestehen müssen. Das heißt, daß die Völker bezüglich dieser Frage nicht um ihre Einwilligung gefragt wurden. Die Annexion wurde im Interesse Englands vollzogen. Daher hatte die Existenz Nigerias für die Engländer eine größere Bedeutung als für die Nigerianer. Auf das wirtschaftliche und politische Interesse Englands und auf das entsprechend ablehnende Gefühl der Bevölkerung baut sich die massive Kolonialisierung des Landes auf, weshalb das nationale Bewußtsein mangelhaft blieb. Dies zog verheerende Konsequenzen nach sich. Die Nigerianer hatten vor der Kolonialisierung kein Interesse an einer nationalen Einheit gehabt. Jede ethnische Gruppe hatte sich wie eine Nation gefühlt - und war es auch im eigentlichen Sinne gewesen.

Der Erfolg der wirtschaftlichen Ausbeutung des Landes und der darauf folgenden Kolonialisierung war schon durch die damalige Uneinigkeit und Vielfalt der Interessen der verschiedenen ethnischen Gruppen vorprogrammiert. Daher kann man sagen, daß der größte Feind Nigerias die Uneinigkeit ist, und daß Nigeria nur in Einheit und Harmonie überleben und gedeihen kann. Der Islam zum Beispiel hat die nördliche Region Nigerias zur Einheit gezwungen - zugunsten des Islams. Später kam der Imperialismus, der das ganze Land politisch zur Einheit zwang - zugunsten der Engländer. Das Christentum, das nach Konfessionen gespalten war, kämpfte nur gegen sich selbst und verschaffte dadurch die existierenden Spaltungen.

Die Kultur Nigerias weist auf die frühe Zivilisation des Landes hin, die in Vergessenheit geraten ist; ein wichtiger Hinweis auf die Vergangenheit Nigerias, auf die die Nigerianer ihre neue Identität aufbauen hätten können. Anstelle dessen bauten viele Nigerianer ihre Identität auf fremde Merkmale und Kulturen auf, was dann später zur Identitätskrise und Unproduktivität führte, und weiterhin Spaltungen und Uneinigkeit - jetzt nicht nur in der Gesellschaft, sondern

auch in den Individuen selber, förderte.

Nigeria hat viele Gründe, die Einheit und Harmonie zwischen den Verschiedenheiten, die das Land charakterisieren, zu fördern. Dazu darf das Land keine von jenen kulturellen Merkmalen, die die Individualitäten prägen, unterdrücken, sondern muß diese konstruktiv fördern - zur Ergänzung all der anderen Merkmale, die zum Aufbau der Nation nötig sind.

Als Nigeria in 1960 unabhängig wurde, freute man sich, weil der gemeinsame Feind, die Engländer, vertrieben war. Es schien als ob die unmenschliche Herrschaft der Engländer den Anlaß gegeben habe, einander als verbrüdert zu betrachten. Diese improvisierte Verbrüderung, die dazu gedient hatte, die Engländer zu vertreiben, wurde nach der Unabhängigkeit nicht mehr so gebraucht wie früher. Der Begriff „Verbrüderung“ und seine Anwendung wurden wieder verstanden wie es auch schon vor der Ankunft der Engländer gewesen war. Der Staat wurde als eine öffentliche Beute angesehen, und wurde genauso behandelt wie zuvor seitens der Engländer. Als Folge davon gab es in fast allen Ebenen Unproduktivität. Unter anderem wurde Nigeria in einen der verheerendsten Kriege, den die Welt je gesehen hatte, gedrängt. Der Bürgerkrieg, der fast drei Jahre lang dauerte, zeigte wie sehr Nigeria einer Harmonie und Einheit in gleichzeitiger Vielheit bedurfte, eine Tatsache, in der die Zukunft des Landes besteht. Der Bürgerkrieg brachte auch nicht viel für die Einheit des Landes ein; der Krieg hatte nur auf die politische Krankheit hingewiesen ohne den Patienten irgendein wirksames Medikament oder Vorbeugungsmittel verschrieben zu haben. Jetzt kennt jeder die nationale Krankheit und jeder versucht die Symptome anstatt die Ursache der Krankheit zu heilen; einige suchen, so weit als möglich, die Krankheit zu meiden. Aber für wie lange?

Ein weiteres Problem für das Land ist der Einfluß fremder Kultur, vor allem, der europäischen Kultur und Zivilisation, die gewiß wiederum nur einen Dualismus im Land hervorrufen wird - wie es auch schon in der Vergangenheit der Fall gewesen war. Kulturen sollten einander im Dialog begegnen; keine darf die anderen unterdrücken oder unüberlegt nachahmen. Die Kulturen sollten sowohl einander ergänzen als auch für einander offen bleiben.

Wir sind der Meinung, daß die Nigerianer bereits genügend Beweise bekommen haben, die ihnen die Lebensnotwendigkeit der Einheit und der Harmonie innerhalb der existierenden Pluralität bewußt werden lassen

müßten. Nigeria soll seine Zukunft auf seine Vergangenheit, auf seine Erfahrung und Eigenart aufbauen. Eine dieser Eigenschaften Nigerias ist seine Religion. Wir werden zunächst die Eigenschaft der traditionellen, nigerianischen Religion betrachten und sehen, ob die Religion in der Lage ist, die Einheit der Nation zu fördern und gleichzeitig ihre spezifisch religiösen Aufgaben wahrzunehmen - vor allem das Wohl der Menschen und die Ehre Gottes.

KAPITEL ZWEI:

DIE TRADITIONELLE RELIGION

Religion gehört zur Natur des Menschen. Wie manche Leute ihre eigene Natur zurückdrängen können, so können manche Leute auch ihre religiöse Eigenschaft zurückdrängen. Religion ist ein gesellschaftliches Phänomen, dem die Gesellschaft und die Menschen zum Leben verhelfen. Das soll nicht heißen, daß die Menschen oder die Gesellschaft die Religion erschaffen haben. Da Religion zur Natur des Menschen gehört, und nicht die Menschen zur Natur der Religion, ist Religion zum größten Teil von der Gesellschaft und vom Menschen gestaltet. Die Kultur prägt die Religion und umgekehrt. Die Funktion der Religion - egal welcher - ist, dem Menschen zum Heil zu verhelfen. Eine Religion zu verstehen heißt, zu wissen, wie und mit welchen Mitteln sie den Menschen zum Heil führt. Der Glaube an ein oder an mehrere überirdische Wesen, die über Macht über den Menschen und sein Schicksal verfügen, bindet die Menschen und ihre Gedanken an dieses Wesen. Diese religiöse Bindung, verbindet nicht nur die Menschen mit dem Objekt der Verehrung, sondern auch miteinander. Aus dieser doppelten Bindung stammen Gesetze, moralische Verpflichtungen, Tradition und Kultur. Das höchste Wesen, das Objekt des Glaubens ist ein Autoritätssymbol; seine Gesetze und Ansprüche an die Menschen sind ewig, unbeschränkt und absolut. Die darauf beruhende Absolutheit der religiösen Praxis schafft religiöse Unfreiheit und beschränkt individuelle religiöse Erfahrung. Die Beschränkung der Möglichkeit der individuellen Gotteserfahrung und die Schwierigkeit, auf die die Einzelnen dabei stoßen, weil sie mit der Absolutheit der religiösen Praxis nicht zu recht kommen können, sowie das darauf folgende religiöse Scheitern,

begünstigte die Thesen der destruktiven Religionskritiker wie Freud, Marx, Feuerbach etc.

Religion ist aufgrund ihres Wesens verpflichtet, dem Individuum zum Heil zu helfen. Die „geheilten“ Individuen bauen dann die Gesellschaft so auf, daß die Gesellschaft eine günstigere Grundlage für religiöse Erfahrung und für das Heil des Einzelnen darstellen kann. Religion kann, wenn sie sich ihrer Aufgabe bewußt ist, den Menschen menschlicher zu machen, zum Eckstein der menschlichen Entwicklung, seines Selbstbewußtseins und seiner Aktivitäten werden; denn dafür ist die Religion bestimmt. Wir werden zunächst sehen, wie die traditionelle, nigerianische Religion sich um das Heil der einzelnen Nigerianer bemüht.

Die traditionelle, nigerianische Religion ist das Symbol der Einheit der nigerianischen Kultur und Weltanschauung. Wir bevorzugen den Begriff „traditionelle, nigerianische Religion“ gegenüber jenem der „traditionellen, nigerianischen Religionen“. Zwar hat jede ethnische Gruppe Nigerias einen Ritus und Mächte, die von der eigenen Tradition geprägt sind. - Fast jedes Dorf hat eigene Mächte, einen eigenen Glauben und eine eigene Liturgie, und wir können deswegen nicht behaupten, daß jedes Dorf seine eigene Religion besäße oder, daß jede ethnische Gruppe eine eigene Religion habe. Denn es gibt trotz dieser Nuancen in den sogenannten Religionen auch bemerkenswerte Grundzüge, die diese „Glauben“ miteinander verbinden und alle regional und dörflich bedingten Nuancen als „Eigenschaften“ einer Religion erkennbar werden lassen. Auf diese Weise wird die Religion reich verziert. Die auffälligsten Grundzüge der „Religionen“, welche diese verbinden und ihnen eine gemeinsame Richtung geben, sind der Glaube an einen außerirdischen und zugleich menschnahen Gott, der alles erschaffen hat, sowie der Glaube an die Geister und an die Mächte, die die Adjutanten Gottes sind. Mit ihnen verhandeln die Menschen direkt (im Gegensatz zu ihrer Beziehung zu Gott), da sie für das menschliche Schicksal verantwortlich sind. Sie können oft böse und eifersüchtig, aber auch gerecht sein. Die Geister sind mächtig. Sie sind für Beruf, Fähigkeiten und für das menschliche Schicksal verantwortlich. Die Rolle der Ahnen als Gründer der Tradition und der Gesetze ist eine weitverbreitete Vorstellung. Sie sind die Beschützer der Tradition und der Kultur. Die Ahnen helfen auch ihren Nachkommen auf der Erde.

Sie leben in Gemeinschaft, in Frieden und in Freude miteinander im Land der Toten. Das kommende, religiöse Heil für jeden besteht im Eintritt in die Gemeinschaft der Ahnen nach dem Tode. Der Glaube an die Reinkarnation gibt Hoffnung, verstärkt das Gefühl der Verbundenheit in der Familie und bestätigt die traditionelle, hochgeschätzte Kontinuität und Gemeinsamkeit.

Diese Grundzüge vereinigen die dörflich und ethnisch geprägten „Religionen“. Sie verleihen ihnen nicht nur ökumenische Einheit, sondern auch den Titel „traditionelle, nigerianische Religion“ eine Religion, in der die Unterschiede integriert sind. Die Bedeutung eines jeden Bestandteils der Religion wird an seiner Nützlichkeit und am Wohl des Menschen gemessen. Nach der Idee der Religion, daß die Individuen für die Gesellschaft leben, baute sich die Gesellschaft oft auf Kosten der Individuen auf. In anderen Worten: Der Objektivismus floriert auf Kosten des Subjektivismus und der Selbstverwirklichung; dieser Tatbestand ist eine der Schwächen der Religion. Das Leben der Kommunität wird gefördert auf Kosten der Einzelnen.

Zur weiteren Entwicklung der Religion gehört die Abschaffung der Mächte und Geister und ihrer Rolle, die ihnen von der Gesellschaft zugeschrieben und für sie erstellt worden war. Denn die Mächte sind nur Produkte der Gesellschaft, um Ordnung und Tradition zu gewährleisten. Dadurch blockieren sie den Weg zwischen Gott und dem Menschen. Ihre soziale Rolle könnte der Staat oder die Menschen selber übernehmen, damit der Mensch einen ungestörten Zugang zu Gott bekommen kann. Diese Religion war das Zentrum der präkolonialen Wirtschaftsordnung, sowie des politischen und des administrativen Systems, der Kultur und der Gesellschaftslehre. Die Religion bestimmte die Lebensweise der Leute und gab Antwort auf alle Fragen. Daher können wir von Philosophie und Theologie der traditionellen, nigerianischen Religion sprechen.

Die Philosophie der Religion beschränkt sich auf den letzten Zweck der Religion, nämlich ein blühendes Leben im Diesseits und im Jenseits. Die Philosophie rechtfertigt die Religion so lange sie das Allgemeinwohl der Menschen anstrebt; das heißt, daß Religion nur dann nützlich ist, wenn sie den Wohlstand der Menschen fördert. Wir bezeichnen eine solche Philosophie als „Vitalismus“. Darunter verstehen wir den Vorrang des Lebens über alles, denn das Leben ist ein göttliches

Attribut, und wir leben, um dieses göttliche Attribut zu fördern - nicht nur im Menschen, sondern überall, wo wir es finden. Alles, was ist, besteht in diesem Attribut.

Die Theologie der Religion beschäftigt sich mit dem Leben Gottes im Menschen, von dem die Zukunft und der Wohlstand des Menschen abhängig sind. Dieses Leben im Menschen ist oft personifiziert. Es nimmt die Gestalt eines Geistes an und bestimmt bzw. beeinflusst das Schicksal des Menschen. Die Theologie bemüht sich um eine gute Beziehung zwischen dem Leben des Menschen und dem Leben Gottes im Menschen aufrechtzuerhalten. Sie beschäftigt sich mit der Frage, wie man Gott und den Mächten gefallen kann, damit der Mensch ein erfülltes und glückliches Leben hier und im Jenseits erlangen kann. Anders gesagt, die Theologie beschäftigt sich mit den täglichen Problemen und Sorgen der Menschen. Sie versucht, dem Menschen zum ersehnten Glück zu verhelfen. Es ist nicht die Aufgabe dieser Theologie, den Menschen heilig, asketisch, fromm oder unmenschlich zu machen, sondern ihm zu helfen, immer menschlicher zu werden - natürlich unter den Vorstellungen und Normen der Gesellschaft, denn die Gesellschaft sorgt für alle Anliegen der Menschen und keines kann ihrer Macht und ihren Vorschriften entkommen.

In Wirklichkeit ist diese Religion eine Replik der traditionellen, nigerianischen Religiosität, eine Replik des Gottesbegriffs und ein Überblick über die Werte und das Streben der Nigerianer. Die Religion zeigt auch wie die zwischenmenschliche Beziehung in der Gesellschaft das Leben der Individuen bestimmt. Die Religion schafft und fördert eine Gesellschaft, in der alles vorgegeben ist. Dadurch hemmt sie die menschliche Initiative und Kreativität, fördert aber gleichzeitig Gemeinschaft und ein Leben, in dem jeder Verantwortung für den Anderen trägt.

Wie wir schon erwähnt haben, besteht die Religion aus verschiedenen Liturgien, aus dem Glauben an verschiedene Mächte und Geister, sowie aus Gesetz und Praxis, die in ihrem bestimmten Gebiet einen gewissen Grad an Absolutheit beanspruchen.

Jeder anerkennt Brauchtum und Glauben der Anderen solange es sich um deren Gebiet und Glaubensgemeinschaft handelt. Dies bedeutet, daß der, der sich in einem fremden Gebiet befindet, alle Gebräuche ebenso streng

wie die Einheimischen einhalten muß, unabhängig davon, ob der Fremde selbst religiös eingestellt ist oder nicht. Denn die Mächte haben über jeden Gewalt, der sich in ihrem Herrschaftsgebiet befindet. Auf diese Weise muß jeder Mensch den anderen in ihrer religiösen Überzeugung Anerkennung und Respekt erweisen.

Wenn wir uns aber daran erinnern, daß diese Mächte und Geister von der Gesellschaft geschaffen wurden, um Ordnung, Stabilität und Wohlstand in der Gesellschaft sowie für die Menschen zu gewährleisten, so fällt uns auf, daß die eben beschriebenen Differenzen gerade durch die Existenz dieser Mächte und Geister zustandegekommen sind. Würde ihre Funktion durch öffentliche Behörden oder Institutionen eingenommen werden, so bestünde die Möglichkeit einer vollkommenen Harmonie innerhalb der Religion. Die Mächte und Geister sind von Menschen erschaffen worden, um ihren Problemen und Fragen entgegenzukommen. Wenn aber die Menschen, in denen ja das Leben, das Attribut Gottes wohnt, versuchen, ihre Probleme selber zu lösen - ohne jegliche außernatürliche Hilfe, außer jener, die direkt von Gott kommt und durch die die Menschen Liebe und Vertrauen zu Gott erfahren -, dann wird die Existenz der Mächte und Geister überflüssig.

Nach allem, was wir gesehen haben, hat die traditionelle, nigerianische Religion den religiösen Boden Nigerias durch ihre Fähigkeit zur Toleranz fruchtbar für die Ökumene gemacht. Sie war ein Vorläufer für das Christentum, denn die traditionelle Religion hat viele Ähnlichkeiten mit dem Alten Testament - wie wir im Folgenden darlegen werden. Außerdem war die Ersetzung der Mächte und Geister durch die allumfassende Macht Gottes für viele Menschen eine wahre Befreiung.

KAPITEL DREI:

DER JÜDISCHE GOTTESBEGRIFF

Um die Entwicklung des Judentums zu verfolgen, muß man unbedingt die Religionen der damaligen, jüdischen Nachbarn, wie die alte ägyptische, assyrische, babylonische ... Religion, berücksichtigen. Religion als ein wesentlicher Aspekt der Kultur ist, wie die Kultur selbst, wandelbar. Die jüdische Religion hat sich immer wieder weiterentwickelt und ist mit zunehmender Konfrontation mit den anderen Religionen und Kul-

turen selbstbewußter geworden.

Die Religionen der jüdischen Nachbarn kannten - im Gegensatz zum Judentum - viele Götter, unter denen dann ein Gott war, der alles erschaffen hatte. Ebenso wie in der traditionellen, nigerianischen Religion haben die Götter der nichtjüdischen Völker eine sehr umfassende Macht und Jurisdiktionsgewalt über die Menschen und die Natur. Sie sind im allgemeinen nett zu ihren Anhängern und sind bekannt für ihre Großzügigkeit, Barmherzigkeit und Gerechtigkeit. Alle Religionen, die wir bisher erwähnt haben - mit Ausnahme des Judentums - sind sehr stark an die Natur gebunden, was aber nicht heißen soll, daß die Religion der Juden nichts mit der Natur zu tun gehabt hätte. Das Judentum war - im Vergleich mit den anderen - etwas „naturfeindlicher“. Sein Glaube sagte, daß man die Natur sich untertan machen solle. Die Götter der nichtjüdischen Völker sind mit der Natur verbunden und offenbaren sich in der und durch die Natur; darum sind die Götter in und von der Natur gegebenen Gestalten dargestellt. Im Gegensatz hierzu machten die Juden kein Bild von Gott. Auch die Völker des Nahost kannten unter ihren vielen Göttern einen Gott, der sowohl die Götter als auch alles andere, das existiert, geschaffen hat. Die Götter sind - wie die Mächte in der nigerianischen Religion - die Adjutanten des Schöpfergottes.

Parallel zu den politischen und wirtschaftlichen Entwicklungen dieser nichtjüdischen Staaten, die eine Zentralisierung der Herrschaft in diesen Ländern und eine Konsolidierung der Macht des Königs mit sich brachten, begann man auch Theologie und Glaube zu systematisieren und zu zentralisieren. Das bedeutete, daß sowohl die Götter als auch der Glaube zentralisiert wurden. Wie nun der König der Alleinherrscher war, so sollte auch sein Gott, der einzige Gott sein. Obwohl man auf diese Weise den Polytheismus allmählich durch den Monotheismus zu ersetzen suchte, blieben diese Religionen doch henotheistisch. Wie das Judentum waren auch diese Religionen Mittel zum Wohlstand. Religion wurde fast als Handel der Leute mit Gott verstanden: sie geben Gott bzw. den Göttern etwas (Opfer), um wiederum etwas von den Göttern zurück zu bekommen. Die Götter und Gott wurden nur als Mittel zum menschlichen Reichtum und Interesse gesehen. Wir neigen oft zu schnell zu der Behauptung, daß das Judentum unter allen Religionen des Nahen Ostens die Heilige (qedos)

gewesen sei. Mag sein, daß es wirklich „qados“ war, so darf es dennoch nicht als abgeschnitten (nikrat) betrachtet werden. Israel war heilig und abseits von den anderen Völkern, aber es war nicht von ihnen abgeschnitten.

Die Juden hatten viel von ihren Nachbarn angenommen. Der Name „El“ war ursprünglich nicht jüdisch. Sie redeten also Gott an wie es auch die anderen Völker taten. Jahwe war für sie unvergleichbar - wie es auch die Götter für ihre Anbeter waren. Die Stärke der Götter bewies sich auf dem Schlachtfeld und im politischen und wirtschaftlichen Erfolg der Anhänger. Gleiches erwarteten die Juden von Jahwe. Die Existenz der Götter war damals allgemein bekannt; die Frage bestand nur darin, welcher Gott stärker als die anderen war. Die Mächtigkeit der Götter wurde an ihren Taten gemessen. Die Götter haben - nach Meinung ihrer Anhänger - alles, was ist, durch die Kraft ihrer Worte geschaffen. Auch diese Vorstellung kann auf Jahwe übertragen werden.

Propheten gab es auch in den anderen Religionen des Nahen Ostens. In Israel brachten die Propheten keine neue Lehre, sondern predigten von dem Bund. Sie forderten die Leute auf, Jahwe Vertrauen zu schenken. Die Propheten waren im allgemeinen Fundamentalisten, die sich an Tradition und Bund treu gehalten haben. Sie ersehnten das kommen des Reiches Gottes. Sie plädierten für ein Reich, in dem Gott allein herrschen sollte - natürlich durch Menschen. In ihrer Sehnsucht, wie die anderen Nationen zu werden, wünschten sich die Juden einen König wie es die Könige anderer Völker waren. Jerusalem wurde eine Hauptstadt wie alle anderen Hauptstädte; der König wurde sakral und Sohn Gottes wie die Könige ihrer Nachbarn. Der Retter, der Messias, wurde nach der Niederlage erhofft - wie viele ihrer Nachbarn es auch erhofft hatten. Jahwe war - wie andere Götter - der König seines Volkes. Zweifelsohne gestalteten die Juden ihre Religion, ihren Kult und Staat nach dem Modell und Beispiel ihrer Nachbarn: Jahwe als der König aller Völker (Am.9,7; Jer10,7), der über sie herrscht (Jes.44, 24-28; 45,1-6). Alle Menschen gehören zu seinem Reich (Dt.2,44;7,13) und zum Reich des Messias (Ps.2,8). Jahwe herrscht auch über die Menschen, die ihn nicht kennen. Er hat Macht über sie (Ez.27; 29). Jahwe ist in Wirklichkeit nicht nur der Gott der Götter, ist nicht bloß ein primus inter pares unter den Göttern, sondern Er ist der einzige Gott, den auch die Völker, die keine direkte Offenbarung von ihm haben, indirekt verehren.

Alle Religionen, die wir bis jetzt gesehen haben, sind in verschiedenen Hinsichten ähnlich, z.B. bezüglich des Zwecks der Religion oder der menschlichen Suche nach Gott und nach dem Sein des Seien-den oder bezüglich der allgemeinen Neigung, Gott oder die Mächte, die Gewalt über die Menschen und ihr Schicksal besitzen, zu beeinflussen oder sogar durch Gebet, Opfer und Magie zu manipulieren versuchen. Um eine Belohnung auf Erden zu erhalten, wird Gutes getan und Gott verehrt. Der Bund mit Gott ist aufgrund materiellen Reichtums gemacht und auch eingehalten worden (Dt.5,16). Der Segen Gottes ist von materiellem Reichtum untrennbar (Joh.42). Gehorsamkeit zum Gesetz wurde als eine Garantie für den Segen Gottes verstanden.

Ein wichtiges Charakteristikum des Alten Testaments ist die alttestamentliche Darstellung von Gott als einen Held in einer tragischen Rolle: als einen, der nicht aufgehört hat, seinen untreuen Leuten seine versöhnende Hand zu geben. Gott wartet geduldig bis sein Volk bereit ist, sich mit Ihm zu versöhnen. Das Alte Testament ist eine geschichtliche Darstellung der Treue, der Geduld und der Liebe Gottes. Während die Götter Opfer zur Versöhnung verlangten, erwartete sich Jahwe nur Gerechtigkeit unter den Menschen. Er verlangte von Seinem Volk Umkehr zu Ihm, die sich durch Werke der Gerechtigkeit und Liebe zeigt. Denn Gott selber ist Liebe und, wer in Gottes Namen Gerechtigkeit und Liebe übt, der ist Gott nahe und kann sich mit Gott identifizieren. Weil der Mensch das Abbild Gottes ist, besteht Gott darauf, daß die Menschen wie Er sein sollen. Gott wollte nicht mehr derjenige sein, der alle religiösen Verhaltensweisen gelten läßt. Darum hat Er Jesus Christus, Seinen einzigen Sohn in die Welt gesandt, um der Welt das einzige, religiöse Verhalten, das Gottes Willen entspricht, zu lehren und vorzuleben. Dieses Verhalten beruht auf Liebe und Selbsthingabe an Gott. Dies bedeutet, daß man, statt Gott auf irgendeine Weise auszunützen, sich selber Gott zur Verfügung stellt, um das ersehnte Leben (Reichtum) in Fülle zu erlangen. Auf diese Weise wurde Jesus zur endgültigen Antwort auf alles religiöse Fragen und Suchen. In ihm wurde der Begriff Gottes klar und verbindlich, und in ihm hat die Menschheit eine Hoffnung auf die endgültige Fülle des Lebens, denn er ist der Weg, das Licht und das Symbol der Einheit für alle Menschen und Religionen.

KAPITEL VIER:

JESUS UND SEINE JÜNGER NACH DEM MARKUS - EVANGELIUM

Es war Jesu Wunsch und Absicht, einen Kreis von Jüngern um sich zu haben, die seine Arbeit auf Erden fortsetzen werden. Damit sie ihn aber verstehen konnten, mußte er sie unterrichten und sie in sein Leben einführen. Jesus gab sich den Jüngern sowohl als Mensch als auch als Gott zu erkennen. Er wollte, daß sie verstünden, daß der Weg zum Heil und zum ewigen Leben nur in ihm und durch ihn erreichbar ist. Er offenbarte sich als Liebe, Gerechtigkeit und Menschlichkeit. In ihm hat Gott gezeigt, daß Er allen Menschen nahe ist - den Sündern ebenso wie den Kranken, den Hungrigen, den Ausgebeuteten, den Unterdrückten, den Armen und allen, die sich von Gott verlassen fühlen. Um die Arbeit Jesu fortsetzen zu können, war es für die Jünger nötig, sich stark mit Jesus zu identifizieren, das heißt, nach dem Willen Gottes zu leben und so zu handeln.

Markus berichtet von den Schwierigkeiten, die Jesus bei der Belehrung seiner Jünger erlebt hat. Er mußte die Jünger ja zum Glauben führen, damit sie seine irdische Tätigkeit fortsetzen konnten. Doch waren - so berichtet Markus es uns - die Jünger verschiedentlich anderer Meinung als Jesus. Ihre Vorstellung vom Messias entsprach nicht dem Selbstverständnis Jesu. Als Christus sein Leiden und seinen Tod ankündigte (Mk.8,31 ff; 9,31.33 ff; 10,32-34. 42 ff), wollten sie diese Absicht Gottes nicht akzeptieren. Abermals versuchte Jesus, ihnen klar zu machen, daß es keinen anderen Weg der Nachfolge gibt, außer jenen der Nachahmung Jesu. Es besteht kein Zweifel daran, daß Jesus wollte, daß seine Jünger seine Arbeit später übernehmen. Sogar Matthäus legt seinen Lesern dar, daß Jesus alles getan hat, um seinen Nachfolgern ein Beispiel zu geben. Die Jünger müssen von ihm lernen, wie man sich in Verfolgung verhalten soll (Mt.10,16 ff; 26 ff; 34 ff). Sie sollten das Leiden und die Herrlichkeit ihres Herrn als selbstverständlich hinnehmen, denn Gottes Werke und Gedanken sind nicht die unseren. So, wie der Menschensohn gekommen ist, um zu dienen und, um sein Leben als Lösegeld hinzugeben, so sollen auch die Jünger Jesu dienen, statt sich bedienen zu lassen (Mk. 10,45).

Nach Johannes müssen die Nachfolger Christi Gott durch ihr Leiden und ihren Tod verherrlichen (Jo. 21,19); und dadurch werden sie die ganze Welt zu Gott bekehren (Joh. 15,18-21) und Früchte bringen (Joh. 21,24). Im Gegensatz zum Alten Testament verlangte Christus von seinen Nachfolgern eine grenzenlose Hingabe an den Willen Gottes, die ihnen zwar Verfolgung und Tod bringen könnte, aber für die doch am Ende die Belohnung steht. Gott ist nicht mehr nur ein Mittel zu Wohlstand und Verherrlichung, auch Verfolgung und Tod um Gottes Willen sind nicht mehr ausgeschlossen. Gott soll nicht mehr einfach Mittel zur Verherrlichung des Menschen sein, sondern die Menschen als Geschöpf Gottes sollen der Verherrlichung Gottes dienen. Der Mensch wird durch seinen Gottes-Dienst selber verherrlicht; das heißt, solange der Mensch den Willen Gottes tut, verherrlicht er Gott und dieser verherrlicht ihn. Denn Gott verherrlicht jeden, der ihn verherrlicht. Um ebenso wie Jesus den Willen Gottes zu tun, müssen die Jünger Jesu den Geist Christi kennenlernen, denn er allein kann den Menschen zum Willen Gottes und zur Wahrheit führen. Der Geist ist selber das Leben und die „Art und Weise Christi“. Wer dieses Leben hat, der besitzt die Quelle des Lebens und kann selber Leben spenden.

Markus vergleicht das Verhalten Jesu, des Geistträgers, mit jenem der Jünger, die den Geist noch nicht empfangen haben: Jesus war entschlossen, zu leiden, er war bereit, den Weg der Erniedrigung zu gehen, um zur Herrlichkeit zu kommen. Die Jünger dagegen lehnten diesen Weg der Erniedrigung ab. Sie dachten wie die Menschen, die den Geist Gottes noch nicht gekannt haben.

Markus vergleicht auch Gottes Offenbarung im Alten Testament mit jener in Jesus von Nazareth. Im Alten Testament offenbarte Gott sich in Macht und Herrlichkeit. Daher waren die Leute gewöhnt, sich Gott mit solchen Würden vorzustellen. Gott ist ein König; wenn er erscheint, tritt er königlich auf. Jesus hat diese Erwartung nicht erfüllt. Er wollte zeigen, wie Gott in Wirklichkeit ist; er allein kennt Gott und er allein kann sagen, wie Gott ist und wie er sich in der Realität darstellt. Doch seine Lehre wurde nicht geglaubt. Man wollte ihn einfach ausnützen, d.h., für die Vorstellungen von Wohlergehen „benützen“, wie es im Alten Testament schon der Fall mit Gott gewesen war. Die Jünger wollten aus Jesu Person und Kraft

eigenen Profit machen; die Juden sollten ihn für politische Zwecke ausnützen; - aber Jesus hat seine Stellung als der Herr der Geschichte, der Gegenwart und der Zukunft bewiesen. Seine Auferstehung war der Wendepunkt im Leben der Jünger. Doch wäre er ihnen nach der Auferstehung nicht erschienen, so hätten sie nicht daran geglaubt (Lk.24,11.22-24; Joh. 20,9-10; Lk.24,30 f; Joh.20,27-29); deshalb bezeichnete Jesus sie als „Unverständige“ (Lk.20,25).

Darüberhinaus vergleicht Markus den Glauben der Jünger, die Jesus immer begleiten durften und, die ihn besser kennen sollten als irgendjemand außerhalb ihres Kreises, mit dem Glauben der Heiden: Ein heidnischer Soldat, der ja mit Jesus gewiß nicht viel zu tun gehabt hatte, erkannte ihn als er am Kreuz hing - also in seiner tiefsten Erniedrigung - als den Sohn Gottes (Mk.15,39). Jesus hat es äußerst schwer gehabt - nicht nur wegen der Verfolgung und Kreuzigung, sondern auch weil er von niemandem verstanden wurde, da keiner seinen Geist kannte.

Durch Empfang des Geistes begriffen die Jünger, daß sie sich Jesus gegenüber falsch verhalten hatten. Sie verstanden ihn nun besser und es wurde ihnen klar, daß Gottes Offenbarung unbeschränkt und undeterminiert verläuft.

Markus wollte prinzipiell die Rolle des Geistes hervorheben, denn ohne diesen gibt es keine Gotteserkenntnis und keine Weisheit. Gäbe es ihn nicht, so wären die Jünger Jesu bis heute unwissend in Bezug auf das, was Jesus und seine Sendung angeht. Die Wunder, die Jesus gewirkt hat, könnten die Jünger dann nicht überzeugen, daß er Macht über Leben und Tod hat. Für die Jünger war Jesus am Kreuz gescheitert, denn das Kreuz war für sie - wie auch für ihre Landsleute - ein Skandalon. Gäbe es keine Auferstehung und keine Eingießung des Heiligen Geistes, so wäre Jesus unbekannt und die Welt bis heute im Dunkel geblieben.

Ohne den Geist kann die Kirche Christus als Sohn Gottes nicht so erkennen wie Christus sich versteht. Nur der Geist Christi kann die Kirche zu der wahren Natur Christi führen; die Kirche muß in diesem Geist geboren werden, um wirklich Leib Christi zu werden. Ohne den Geist Christi gäbe es keine Kirche. Die Kirche und ihre Einheit kann nur im Geist Christi bestehen und sich in ihm erkennen lassen. In Christus erkennt man, wie die Mensch/Gott-Beziehung aussehen soll. Sein Geist setzt sein Werk in jedem fort, der den Geist

empfangen hat, und, der das Werk Christi ausführt. So jemand ist auch ein Christus und besitzt die Quelle des Lebens. Die Kirche braucht den Geist, um die Menschen auf die Nähe des Gottesreiches aufmerksam zu machen, um die Leute zur Quelle des Lebens zu führen und, um die Einheit der Menschheit zu verwirklichen. Wir werden im Folgenden sehen, auf welche Weise die Kirche mit diesen Problemen fertig wird.

KAPITEL FÜNF:

DIE KIRCHE

Die Kirche ist der Leib Christi und auch das Volk Gottes. Christus lehrte vom Reich Gottes und forderte die Leute auf, ihren Sinn zu ändern und an die Frohbotschaft zu glauben, denn „die Zeit ist erfüllt, das Reich Gottes ist nahe“ (Mk.1,15). Es ging ihm darum, den Menschen zur Umkehr zu helfen. Sie müssen ihre gestörte Beziehung zu Gott wieder gutmachen. Die Zeit ist gekommen, wenn Gott sich den Völkern endgültig offenbaren möchte. Christus hat nur ein offenes und aufnahmefähiges Herz von seinen Zuhörern verlangt, damit sie die Selbstoffenbarung Gottes (das Reich Gottes, das nahe ist) begreifen und sich im Reich Gottes verwirklichen können. Gottes Offenbarung ist eine Einladung zum Glauben und zum Mitmachen. Diejenigen, die glauben und mitmachen, setzen das Werk Christi fort und sind schon im Reich Gottes, denn ihr Wille ist in Eintracht mit dem Willen Gottes.

Die Urgemeinde war aus Männern und Frauen aufgebaut, deren Wille mit dem Willen Gottes in Verbindung stand (Apg.4,19-20; 5, 28-32; Röm.6,16-19; 8,1-17; Gal.4,8-10). Sie verstanden sich als das neue Gottesvolk, ein Volk, das die Beachtung des Gesetzes als Mittel zum Heil ablehnte und statt dessen das Supremat und die Führungsrolle des Geistes, den es empfangen hatte, anerkannte. Die Urgemeinde schätzte die Vormachtstellung des Geistes über das Gesetz und über die menschliche Willkür.

Die Apostolischen Väter sehnten sich nach dem Reich Gottes, das außerhalb des Diesseits liegt und, auf das sie sich vorbereiteten.

Der Märtyrertod war für sie der schnellste Weg zum Reich Gottes. Nach der Meinung mancher Kirchenväter ist das Reich Gottes noch nicht da; Gott hat noch nicht die Herrschaft der Welt übernommen, darum hat Christus, der Sohn Gottes gelitten und wurde hingerichtet. Darum leiden auch die Christen noch, denn die Herrschaft Gottes ist ja noch nicht da. Aber sie ist nahe. Sie sahen die Kirche wie ein Sammelbecken, wo sich die Auserwählten für das Reich Gottes vorbereiteten. Für andere Kirchenväter hatte sich das Reich Gottes zwar schon etabliert, doch noch nicht vollzogen; es ist schon da und auch noch nicht da. Die Herrschaft Christi ist schon eingeführt - aber im Vergleich zum kommenden, eschatologischen Reich Gottes ist die Herrschaft Christi und des Vaters noch nicht etabliert. Sie befindet sich im Werden. Darum beten die Christen jeden Tag für das Kommen des Reiches. Die Christen müssen für das Kommen des Reiches Gottes aber nicht nur beten, sondern auch kämpfen. Sie kämpfen für das Kommen des Reiches Gottes, wenn sie sich von Sünden distanzieren; sie müssen frei von Sünden und Begierde nach dem Vergänglichen sein. Die Kirche wurde als das sichtbare aber unvollkommene Reich Gottes auf Erden angesehen, eine Kirche, die sich auf dem Weg zu ihrer Vollendung im Himmel befindet. Es ist die Aufgabe der Kirche, die Frage zu beantworten, was der Mensch ist, um fähig zu werden, den Menschen zu seinem Heil zu führen.

Die Psychologen betrachten den Mensch als ein Tier, das von Trieben und Instinkten bestimmt ist, andere meinen, er sei ein Reflex-Apparat, dessen Verhalten aufgrund bestimmter äußerer Reize voraussagbar und modifizierbar ist. Dabei spielen Gefühle und Motivationen keine Rolle. Für die Philosophen ist der Mensch ein rationales Wesen, das einzige Wesen, das denken und fragen kann. Solange er vernünftig ist, wird man ihn durch das Gesetz der Vernunft und der Logik erkennen und verstehen. Das heißt, daß der Mensch ein Wesen ist, das in seiner Natur (Vernünftigkeit) erforschbar und determinierbar ist. Keine Wissenschaft kann mit Sicherheit sagen, was der Mensch ist, ohne zuerst zu sagen, was Gott ist, denn der Mensch ist nicht nur das Abbild Gottes, sondern ist auch auf Gott angewiesen. Außerdem läßt sich der Mensch - aufgrund seiner Freiheit - nicht determinieren. Christus ist die Antwort auf die Frage nach dem Menschen.

Es ist der vollkommene Mensch, das Ideal der Menschheit, die Vollkommenheit des göttlichen Abbildes, also dessen, was der Mensch sein sollte.

Die Kirche ist verpflichtet, jedem Gläubigen zu helfen, ein echter „anderer Christus“ zu werden; um das zu tun, muß die Kirche es lernen, einen jeden als ein Individuum mit Freiheit, Gewissen und Geschichte anzusehen, als ein Wesen, das nur in seiner bekannten Umgebung und Gemeinschaft das Evangelium erleben und verwirklichen kann. Daher die Notwendigkeit der Kultur und Traditionen der verschiedenen Völker und Gruppen. Um effektiv zu arbeiten, benötigt die Kirche den Geist Christi, den Mitbegründer der Kirche, denn nur er allein kann den einzelnen zu Christus führen und demjenigen helfen, Christus ähnlich zu werden. Solange sich jeder darum bemüht, Christus ähnlich zu sein, konvergieren wir in Christus, dem Einheitspunkt der Menschheit.

Die Kirche als die Gemeinschaft der Gläubigen ist eine sichtbare Institution mit Ordnung und Gesetzen. Sie ist auch die Gemeinschaft derjenigen, die bewußt oder unbewußt das Werk Christi tun - Menschen, die durch ihre Tätigkeit der Liebe und Gerechtigkeit Christus ähnlich werden. Daher muß es auch eine unsichtbare Kirche auf der Erde geben, eine Kirche, die über allen christlichen Konfessionen steht und, in der alle Konfessionen in gleicher Weise enthalten sind. Die sichtbare Kirche als Institution und zugleich als Inkarnation des Wortes Gottes ist effektiver als die unsichtbare Kirche, denn die sichtbare Kirche ist die Vergegenwärtigung Christi unter den Menschen; daher die gesellschaftliche Verpflichtung der Kirche. Als der mystische Leib Christi trägt sie Verantwortung für alle Menschen und für die gesamte Natur (ohne Ausnahme!). Außerdem ist sie als das Volk Gottes die Gemeinschaft aller Menschen, denn jeder ist Gottes Kind und gehört daher zum Volk Gottes; eine Tatsache, die vom Menschen unabhängig ist.

Gott, der Vater aller Menschen, rettet und er beurteilt den Menschen nach seiner Erkenntnis und seiner Erfahrung. Er rettet die Christen „durch christliche Mittel und Gegebenheiten“, den Moslem „durch muslimische Mittel und Gegebenheiten“, den Juden, Buddhisten, Anhänger der traditionellen, afrikanischen Religion usw. genauso -

jeden nach seiner Erkenntnis. Im Hinblick hierauf tritt es ganz klar hervor, wie gefährlich jegliche Form des religiösen Absolutismus sein kann. Die Kirche Christi ist eine „offene Kirche“, offen für alle Menschen und offen für die Zukunft.

Eine „offene Kirche“ hat genügend Platz für alle menschlichen Probleme, auch wenn sie nicht spezifisch religiös sind, sie hat Platz für andere Konfessionen und Religionen, denn für sie alle ist Christus gestorben und auferstanden. Die Kirche kann ohne Hilfe und Beistand seitens des Geistes keine „offene Kirche“ sein. Die Kirche darf aber keine „geschlossene Gesellschaft“ sein, eine Gesellschaft, die sich von anderen Gesellschaften ausschließt. Eine „geschlossene Gesellschaft oder Kirche“ hat keinen Platz für den Geist Christi, denn der Geist Christi ist frei und läßt sich nicht beschränken oder verkürzen. Die Zukunft der Kirche und ihre Einheit liegen in ihrer Fähigkeit, dem Geist Christi die Führerrolle zu überlassen.

KAPITEL SECHS:

EINE ÖKUMENISCHE THEOLOGIE

Das Wort „ökumenisch“ ist vom griechischen Wort „oikoumene“ abgeleitet und bedeutet „die ganze bewohnte Erde“.

Das Wort hatte ursprünglich eine politische Bedeutung. Der römische Kaiser bezeichnete sich als „der Herr der Oikoumene“. Später nannte man den Kaiser Nero „Den Retter und Wohltäter der Oikoumene“.

Als die Kirche sich über die ganze, bekannte Welt ausbreitete, wurde das Wort auch in der alten Kirche gebraucht. Während der Regierungszeit Konstantins identifizierte man das Wort Oikoumene mit dem christlichen Imperium Konstantins und später mit dem seiner Nachfolger. Im traditionellen, katholischen Sinn wurde das Wort zur Bezeichnung eines universalen Konzils der Kirche verwendet, das vom Papst geleitet bzw. zumindest genehmigt wurde. Der Patriarch von Konstantinopel nannte sich „der ökumenische Patriarch von Konstantinopel“. Der heutige Gebrauch des Wortes entstand 1910 in Edinburgh anlässlich der Konferenz, deren Thema die Probleme der Evangelisierung in den

Missionsländern bildete. Die ökumenische Bewegung wurde erst ab 1960 von den Katholiken gutgeheißen.

„Ökumenische Bewegung“ ist die allgemeine Bezeichnung für das Streben nach der Einheit der Kirchen und ökumenisch sind alle Taten und Worte - religiöse und nicht-religiöse -, die für die Einheit der Christen förderlich sind. Die ökumenische Theologie als die Theorie der ökumenischen Bewegung erforscht die Ursache der Kirchenspaltungen, verdeutlicht die Gefährdung des Evangeliums und der gesamten Menschheit durch die Spaltung und bemüht sich um alles, was für die Einheit der Christen erforderlich ist.

Eine der Ursachen der Spaltungen, eine traditionelle Schwäche der Kirche und zugleich ein Thema, das heute die Einheit der Kirchen erschwert, ist die Neigung der Kirche zum Absolutismus, denn dadurch macht sie sich zu einer „geschlossenen Gesellschaft“, zur einzigen Trägerin der absoluten Wahrheit. Um Ökumene zu fördern, muß sich die Kirche - egal welche - als einen Teilaspekt der Inkarnation bzw. der Konkretisierung der göttlichen, unendlichen Wahrheit sehen. Die Kirche als eine Verkörperung des unendlichen Wortes Gottes kann nicht Anspruch auf das gesamte Wort nehmen, denn das Wort ist selber Gott, der sich nicht lokalisieren oder definieren läßt.

Nicht einmal die gesamte Welt könnte die unendliche Wahrheit Gottes in sich fassen - geschweige denn die Kirchen. Weil man diese Tatsache nicht berücksichtigt hat, als Nigeria missioniert wurde, besteht bis heute ein kalter Krieg zwischen dem Christentum in Nigeria und der traditionellen, nigerianischen Religion; ein Kampf, der die Verwurzelung des Christentums in Nigeria erheblich erschwert. Die Art und Weise, wie man das Land christianisiert hat, hat viel zu den heutigen Problemen der Kirche Nigerias beigetragen. Die Identifizierung des Christentums mit dem Kolonialismus hat das Ansehen des Christentums im allgemeinen geschädigt. Aber auch die Kirchenspaltung hat viel zu der heutigen Unglaubwürdigkeit der Kirchen und zu den heutigen Schwierigkeiten bei der Verwirklichung des Evangeliums beigetragen. Die Uneinigkeit der Kirchen Nigerias (Nigeria hat mehr als zehn Kirchen) hat auch die existierende Spaltung innerhalb der Bevölkerung mitverschuldet. Der alte ethnisch, orientierte Separatismus wurde durch den universalen Anspruch des Christentums gemindert.

Doch zugleich wurde eine neue Art von Separatismus eingeführt, nämlich, der der religiösen Konfessionalität. Seit 1911 gibt es ökumenische Konferenzen der Kirchen Nigerias, die die nigerianischen, protestantischen Kirchen einberufen, um ihre internen Probleme zu lösen, zum Beispiel, wie man die Katholiken im Land ausstechen kann oder, wie man das Land nach Konfessionen aufteilen kann, um alle Rivalitäten auszuschließen.

Die Einheit der Kirchen hängt von ihrer Treue zu Christus und zu seiner Mission ab, nämlich, dem Menschen zu dienen und, ihm zu helfen, das Heil zu erlangen. Es genügt nicht, an Christus zu glauben; man muß auch das Leben Christi leben, wie Christus es gelebt hat.

Die Art von Einheit, die die Kirchen zusammenbringen kann, ist die Einheit, bei der keine Konfession die andere bedrängt bzw. die andere absorbiert, sondern sie ist die Einheit, in der Differenzen als Früchte des Geistes angenommen werden. Denn, wo in Liebe und Kollegialität Differenzen als notwendige Antriebskraft der Entwicklung angenommen werden, da ist echte Harmonie und Einheit, weil jeder den anderen braucht. Das Wichtigste ist dann das gemeinsame Ziel, nämlich Christus ähnlich zu werden. Die Vielfalt der Kirche in Liebe ist unentbehrlich für das Wachstum der Kirche und für die Verwirklichung des Evangeliums. Verschiedenheit war nicht an sich die Ursache der früheren Spaltungen in der Kirche, sondern der Haß. Darum ist nun Umkehr der erste Schritt zur Einheit der Kirche, eine Umkehr zu Liebe und Versöhnung. Eine solche Trennung aus Haß und Verachtung ist sündhaft. Deshalb kann man Ökumene als eine Befreiung von Sünden bezeichnen.

Es gibt unterschiedliche Ursachen der Kirchentrennungen. Die Trennung der West- und Ostkirche wurde unter anderem wegen des Anspruchs der westlichen Kirche auf einen dogmatischen und kirchlichen Absolutismus verursacht.

Wenn die Kirche fähig gewesen wäre, die konstruktive Kritik seitens christlich, engagierter Theologen wie Erasmus, Martin Luther usw. positiv zu beurteilen und sie ernstzunehmen, so hatte es vielleicht die Trennung des 16. Jahrhunderts nicht gegeben. Aber, weil die Kirche ihren Anspruch der Absolutheit für unantastbar hielt, wurde jegliche Kritik als Aufstand verstanden.

Wäre die Kirche von Anfang an ihrer geistigen Aufgabe treu geblieben, ohne unerforderliche, politische und wirtschaftliche Ansprüche, so hätten vielleicht die weltlichen Herrscher kein großes Interesse daran gefunden, den Niedergang des Papsttums zu wünschen oder, den Papst zu unterjochen. Die Mißgunst der weltlichen Herrscher gegenüber dem Papst begünstigte die protestantische Reformation in Deutschland und den Anglikanismus in England.

Eine nigerianische, ökumenische Theologie beschäftigt sich mit den Problemen, die die Verwirklichung des Evangeliums in Nigeria erschweren- sowie mit deren Lösung. Nigerianische, ökumenische Theologie soll sich zuerst mit dem Individuum beschäftigen, um dem Individuum zur rechten Umkehr zu helfen; ihm zu helfen, bewußt zu erleben, daß der Mensch ein Abbild Gottes ist und aufgefordert ist, Christus ähnlich zu werden. Die Theologie fängt vom Individuum aus an (Subjektivismus), von wo aus sie sich weiter entwickelt, um schließlich in die Gemeinschaft (Objektivismus) ein. Jeder lernt, das Problem der anderen als sein eigenes zu betrachten, um die Gesellschaft aufzubauen und Zeugnis für Christus abzulegen. Man lernt, das Leben - sowohl sein eigenes als auch das der anderen Christen - zu schätzen und zu fördern. Daher bezeichnen wir die nigerianische, ökumenische Theologie als eine „Interkonfessionelle Spiritualität“, die den einzelnen vorbereitet, dem anderen zuzuhören, ihn ernst zu nehmen, sich gegenseitig zu bereichern - zur Ehre Gottes des Vaters und zum Wohl der Menschheit. Wir betrachten die nigerianische Ökumene als eine Vorbereitung auf den Dialog mit der traditionellen Religion und mit dem Islam.

KAPITEL SIEBEN:

NIGERIANISCHE ÖKUMENISCHE THEOLOGIE UND AFRIKANISCHE (NIGERIANISCHE) THEOLOGIE

Theologie als Glaubenswissenschaft reflektiert an die Offenbarung Gottes, sie entfaltet und erhellt die Offenbarung Gottes, die man im Glauben angenommen hat. Theologie ist die menschliche Antwort und Reaktion auf Gottes Offenbarung. Die Offenbarung ist die gött-

liche Einladung an den Menschen, eine Einladung zu werden was Gott selber ist, nämlich die Quelle des Lebens und der Liebe für alle.

Afrikanische Theologie ist die Antwort der Afrikaner auf die Offenbarung und Einladung Gottes. Die Eingeladenen bringen mit sich ihre sozialen, wirtschaftlichen und politischen Probleme, die sie belasten und hindern die volle Verwirklichung der Aufforderung Gottes und der Verwurzelung des Wortes Gottes in Afrika.

Afrikanische Theologie ist eine reflektierende, methodisch geleitete Antwort auf die Offenbarung Gottes, die zum Selbstbewußtsein und zu Selbsterhellung der Afrikaner als Abbild Gottes führt. Die Theologie ist die geistige Antwort auf die Frage, wie das Wort Gottes in Afrika und im afrikanischen Menschen sich verwirklichen läßt.

Die Schwierigkeit mit dem Glauben und mit der Realisierung des Evangeliums liegen an der Geschichte der Evangelisierung oder der Missionalisierung Afrikas und an den Widersprüchen, die zwischen Praxis und Glauben bis heute bestehen. Die Uneinigkeit zwischen christlicher Praxis und Glaube begünstigt die heute existierenden sozialen, wirtschaftlichen, politischen und kulturellen Ungerechtigkeiten, die die Afrikaner am meisten verelenden. In diesem Sinne versteht sich die afrikanische Theologie, egal welche, als das Gewissen der klassischen Theologie und als der afrikanische Beitrag zum Aufbau der gesamten, christlichen Theologie.

Die afrikanische Theologie müßte sich die wesentliche Aspiration und Aufgabe der traditionellen Religion aneignen, sie soll eine Vervollkommnung der traditionellen, afrikanischen Religion sein und gleich die Verwurzelung des Evangeliums Christi in der afrikanischen Kultur und Menschseins. Als eine befreiende Theologie, sie hilft dem Menschen menschlicher zu werden, isch mit sich selbst und mit den anderen zu versöhnen. Um ihren befreienden und versöhnenden Charakter zeigt sich die Theologie als eine ökumenische Theologie, die Versöhnung oder Einheit in Vielfalt und in Differenzen sucht.

Afrikanische oder nigerianische Theologie muß ökumenisch sein, um den Namen „afrikanisch oder nigerianisch“ zu verdienen. Um ökumenisch zu sein, muß die Theologie nicht nur inter-konfessionelle Probleme berücksichtigen, sondern auch alle Probleme, die die Afrikaner be-

treffen und die die Verwirklichung des Evangeliums erschweren. Die Zielsetzungen aller theologischen Fächer sollen einander koordinieren, in dem sie dem Menschen helfen Christus ähnlich zu werden; sie sollen nicht nur den Menschen informieren, sondern ihm praktischen Beistand und Unterstützung zum Ziel leisten. Die theologischen Fachrichtungen sind für die afrikanische Theologie unentbehrlich. So lange sie dem Menschen helfen Christus ähnlich zu werden und Widersprüche zwischen Glaube und Praxis überwinden, werden sie für die Theologie und vor allem für die ökumenische Theologie Afrikas unentbehrlich bleiben. Wir sind zuversichtlich, daß die nigerianische, ökumenische Theologie einen großen Beitrag zur ökumenischen Theologie im Allgemeinen leisten kann.

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